TRAINING SOCCER LEGENDS

A Proven Way to Help You Teach the Unique Skills, Tactical Speed and Mentality of Great Players

BY ANDY BARNEY
Training Soccer Legends

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Dedication

“An understanding heart is everything in a teacher, and cannot be esteemed highly enough. One looks back with appreciation to the brilliant teachers, but with gratitude to those who touched our human feeling. The curriculum is so much necessary raw material, but warmth is the vital element for the growing plant and for the soul of the child.”

Carl Jung

I would like to dedicate this book to two wonderful men who were living embodiments of the above quote by Carl Jung and the two greatest influences on my soccer career.

First, my father George Thomas Barney who instilled in me an undying love for the “beautiful game.” He revered the great dribblers and goal-scorers and fascinated me with tales of Sir Stanley Matthews and his amazing ability to beat an opponent with a move even though the defender thought he knew which way “Sir Stan” was going. My father dragged me out of bed for games on cold frosty winter mornings, faithfully transported me to soccer events and gently chided my mother for nagging me over the torn trousers and grass stains incurred in the endless soccer games on the local rec’. He put me to bed early every Saturday night and then woke me up punctually at 10:10 pm for “Match of the Day”. He bought me the only real football in our working class neighborhood and a pair of George Best Stylo Matchmaker boots that I wore to bed for many a week. His advice was always positive and he never missed one of my games.

Second, I would like to honor my college soccer coach and national staff coach for Wales - Mr Stuart Griffiths. “Stuey”, as he was affectionately known, taught me the values of gentle, loving mentorship. He was a shining example of fairness, ethical behavior and sportsmanship. A kinder, softer spoken, more caring role model for loving leadership would be hard to find.

Both have now passed away and the world is a bleaker place without them. However, they left a positive legacy that continues to ripple across the lake of life, influencing more people vicariously than they could ever have hoped to touch personally.

Each of us can only hope that our lives will mean as much!
Acknowledgements

No man is an island! It has taken a tremendous amount of hard work, sacrifice and input by many wonderful people who have contributed to this book, either by providing material and ideas, or by supporting me while I researched, analyzed, recorded, collated and wrote.

I would like to thank my wife Christie Barney who made an incredible contribution by covering me in many a family endeavor and by offering her unwavering support for what seemed like a never ending project. My mother Gladys Barney who instilled in me the love of the written and spoken word by reading to me every night as a child. My sister Angela Barney who was responsible for getting me to switch from a business career path to take a Phys’ Ed’ degree and Christie’s grandfather Richard Hammond, who has been my unofficial mentor in many things business and family related since I married. I would also like to thank my mother and father in law Carol and Richard Hammond Junior for freeing up my time to focus on this endeavor by doing many of the house and garden maintenance tasks and babysitting our children when soccer coaching and event management took me elsewhere.

The major contributor of material for this book over the years has been the co-founder of the K.C. Legends club and in so many ways a co-author of the book, Tom Mura. Tom is a Director of Coaching for the K.C. Legends club. His support in building Soccer Excellence and the K.C. Legends club, and his tremendous insight and ideas on how to improve the training process, have added so much to this effort. Without Tom this book would not have been possible. Having him as a great friend and confidante for nearly twenty years has been a priceless factor.

Probably the second most influential idea generator for this body of work has been Dean Brendel. Dean coaches in the Legends club and during the club’s early years his two sons played for me. Dean brought his differing expertise and perspective from coaching weight lifting and American Football to the soccer environment and, over the course of the past 16 years, has offered many perceptive suggestions and numerous improvements to the philosophy.

I would like to thank Huw Williams for being the devil’s advocate and twenty-five years of great friendship plus Paul Teall and my cousin Duncan Barney for a lifetime of camaraderie and support.

Unbeknown to him one of the greatest influences on the direction the Legends Soccer Club and this book have taken has been Anson Dorrance, the head coach at the University of North Carolina and ex-women’s national team coach. I was fortunate enough to take a ‘B’ license under Anson in Tampa, Florida and later to work with him as a staff coach on the U19 National Camp in Marquette, Michigan. Over the course of that camp Anson shared with me many of his ideas about coaching and when I told him my plans to start the Legends club, encouraged me to focus very heavily on the creative dribbling and finishing skills of the players. I continued to research and study his methods from afar and have found his two excellent books, “Training
Soccer Champions” and “The Vision of a Champion” to be the best coaching books I have yet read.

The other K.C. Legends team coaches have all been instrumental in adding to and refining the Training Soccer Legends philosophy. At the time of writing these fine ladies and gentlemen are: Dan Campione, Mike Jensen, Pat Ozburn, Jon Collett, Rocky Orton, John Duker, Marlo Orton, Chris Cota, Brandon Ulm, Beth Richards, Drew Perkins, Scott Vermillion, Kevin Wardlaw, Doug Kaplinger, Scott Gaither & Jeff Luther. For editing help Karen High has been invaluable.

Other positive influences have been my coach at British Leyland, Barry Symonds. My coach at Oxford City, Maurice Kyle & my coach at Bicester Town and Banbury United, Nigel Cassidy. Before finishing, I would like to acknowledge the fantastic dribblers and goal scorers who have provided me with so much joy and inspiration throughout the years. As a youth player I had the pleasure of playing with Clive Walker who later played for Chelsea and England. As an adult the best dribbler and goal scorer I played with was a Yugoslavian/Albanian, Edmund Rugova, who played for the New York Cosmos and Kansas City Comets.

From the professional and world game my influences have been as follows; Pele, Maradona, Cruyff, Best, Matthews, Puskas, Garrincha, Kempes, Falcao, Jairzinho, Zico, Socrates, Junior, Roberto Carlos, Romario, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Robinho, Platini, Zidane, Cantona, Baggio, Eddie Gray, Hoddle, Gascoigne, Jimmy Johnstone, Rodney Marsh, Henry & Rooney. Millions of fans worldwide have been captivated by the sheer brilliance and artistry these players brought to the soccer field. As a team I never tire of watching Brazil. In all of their games there is creativity, individual brilliance, fast incisive teamwork and above all, entertainment.

Last but not least I would like to acknowledge my five great daughters, Brittany, Ashley, Bailey, Brooke and Holly Barney. Without the chance to coach and take input from the older three, plus the understanding of gender differences and the motivation to succeed that being a father of five girls has added to my life, this book would be much the poorer.

For further information on “Training Soccer Legends” opportunities i.e. camps, clinics, consultancy, advice and franchises. Please contact Andy Barney at andy@kclegendssoccer.com or 913-636-4073
Why You Really Need this Book

“Whatever you can do or think you can, begin it. Boldness has power, and genius and magic in it.”

Goethe

My name is Andy Barney – Founder of the “Training Soccer Legends” method of soccer coaching. In 1989 I founded the Legends Soccer club in Kansas City and began to question the conventional team oriented coaching philosophy I had adhered to for the previous 15 years. As a result of many years of study, analysis, trial and error, I have created a whole new way to coach the game and as a consequence 25 Legend club players have been drafted to play professionally.

Do you want to learn to “Be Like Mike”? Michael Jordan was the most dominant player in the history of the NBA. How about Wayne Gretzky or Magic Johnson or Pele? Each of these men had the ability to individually beat a player and score the game winning points. This “Big Play” ability was what set them apart from their peers and is what made them Legends of their sport. What you will learn from the “Training Soccer Legends” book will be a unique and vastly more beneficial way of playing or, if you are a coach, developing players. However, you will need to open your mind to a whole new way of playing or training players that conflicts with your previous perspective. Even Bill Gates had a narrow vision of the future in 1981 when he made the statement, “640K ought to be enough computer memory for anybody.” The unique approach outlined here will challenge both your open mindedness to new ideas and your ability to reason.

The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is unique and more beneficial for many reasons. Here are a few:

- Until ages 14-15 the technical focus is 100% on deceptive dribbling and shooting.

- Years are spent focusing on the 1 v 1 skills of beating a player, finishing and defending in the clutch.

- Until age 18 my players will not perform practice drills in greater numbers than two versus two i.e. one ball between four players.

- This approach has many similarities to the street soccer environments in which the world’s greatest team players learned to play.

- It is the only way to develop legendary skill and speed of thought.

- It focuses on the skills and tactics that will make players the best they can be when they go to college and make the professional ranks when they graduate.
It’s more fun than other methods!!!

The “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum is truly unique because it relates soccer skill development to the Physical Education principles of transfer of training, (each skill builds upon the next), economy of training, (many things being accomplished at one time), and specificity of training, (everything relates to the sport and has a purpose). It utilizes accepted practice in childhood education and child psychology. It profits from the benefits of skill compounding. It involves the two skills that are easiest to practice at home and most motivating to players. It focuses on the skills that develop great self-belief and leadership. It emphasizes risk and the individual win instead of safety first and the team statistic. It trains the total soccer player not the limited positional player. It trains the ability vital to making big plays that guarantee selection to the higher levels of play, i.e. state select, college and professional teams. It refutes the instant gratification “win now, pay later” mentality that permeates modern society. It demands great failure on the road to great success. It creates players of amazing perception and skill. It “operant conditions” the technical and tactical habits necessary to play at the very top. It recognizes that there’s no way any human can learn all the techniques and tactics of soccer before they complete their youth career at age 18, and that attempting to do so will only result in poorly developed skills and little tactical understanding that can be used at the highest level.

The curriculum first focuses on the technical stage where all players work exclusively on the most creative and difficult skills of the game. It gradually transitions into the 1 v 1 stage where they learn to dominate the immediate opponent. It then changes slowly from the 1 v 1 into the 2 v 2 phase. This is where players are taught to combine with teammates to create, exploit or destroy goal-scoring opportunities. As a result mature Legend trained players are at home in the clutch and feel totally comfortable with making the big plays that determine the outcome of games, at both ends of the field.

“Creativity can solve almost any problem. The creative act, the defeat of habit by high originality, overcomes everything.”
George Lois

In every practice from the 1 v 1 stage onwards players are challenged maximally in the four key developmental areas of technique, tactics, physiology and psychology so, for the first time ever, you are about to learn and understand an approach that develops all four components of soccer to the greatest degree in every single practice. When reading this book your traditional paradigms will be destroyed because the philosophy, inherent complications and structure of almost everything in this book is different from the norm.

The skills are different and they’re more fun, the training area is smaller than normally acceptable, the practices are more crowded than those recommended by more traditional coaches. We don’t use bibs, I keep stats, I demand greedy “ball hog” play and use many more methods to achieve my goal of eventually creating the truly complete player.
As you digest the unique methods described herein your current thoughts and beliefs will be questioned and challenged in ways you have never imagined and yet the confusion, chaos and creativity involved in the “Training Soccer Legends” way will turn players into creative, improvisational, tough, quick thinking, soccer geniuses.

Open your mind. Understand and recognize the truth. Read and analyze carefully because, if you adopt the original methods set out here, you’re in for the ride of your soccer life.

“Man’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes
About the Author

In this exceptional coaching book Andy Barney, one of soccer’s original thinkers, gives the soccer coaching establishment food for thought and self-examination in a way that only someone with his background, study and experience can. Andy was born in Oxford, England he was brought up in a soccer family with two generations of professional play Andy was a registered semi-professional player with Oxford City at age 16. He became a branch sales manager for a large office equipment company at 21. While studying Physical Education from ages 23 to 26, he was ever present with the British Collegiate team. He graduated with honors in Human Movement Studies at 26. Before moving to America he coached British youth soccer teams for ten years and lectured in Physical Education. After arriving in KC he founded British Soccer Camps, (Now Challenger Sports, The USA’s largest camp organization). He was Director of Coaching for the Kansas State Soccer Association from age 27 to 32 and formerly Mid-West Girls Regional Director of Coaching and USSF U19 National Staff Coach/Selector. For five years he served as Director of Marketing and Coaching for a multi-million dollar indoor soccer and sports mall company. He coached at Avila University in KC, is currently in his 18th year as Director of Coaching for the Kansas City Legends Soccer Club and an NSCAA Convention clinician. Andy holds a United States Soccer Federation “A License” an NSCAA Advanced National Diploma and coaching qualifications in 8 other sports. Andy’s teams have won 13 National Indoor Championships & 3 USYSA Regional Championships. A team with ten of Andy’s former players coached by Chris Klein of U.S. National team fame, won the U20 National Outdoor Championship in 2002. Andy is the owner of Soccer Excellence Inc., the K.C. Legends Soccer Club, National Indoor Soccer Championship, SuperClubs North America, the SuperClubs National Team Tours and the HappyFeet Preschool & Legends Soccer Club Franchises. Andy is the author of a 320 page book on soccer coaching “Training Soccer Legends”. In his vivid, unorthodox soccer book he describes the philosophies and methods that have led to the successes of the teams and individual players who play for the Kansas City Legends Soccer Club. Moving from topic to topic, in each segment he provides new thought-provoking insight on questionable youth coaching methods. He draws from the many strands of his experience, his passion for the game of soccer, his lifelong infatuation with the great players of each era, his study of physical development and leadership, his loyal credo, his adventures in competition with players of many different ages, abilities, classes and national backgrounds, plus the hard work, headaches and rewards of the soccer playing, promoting and coaching life. Plainspoken, wise and enormously original, here at last is a book that addresses past and current coaching abuses, forges new developmental pathways and expands future coaching horizons. This is a book written for every soccer player, aficionado, coach or parent with a vision of maximizing each individual’s potential.

For further information on “Training Soccer Legends” opportunities i.e. camps, clinics, consultancy, advice and franchises. Please contact Andy Barney at andy@kclegendssoccer.com or 913-636-4073
Preface

The soccer field is a combination of chess match and theatre of war. On most teams there are usually multiple foot soldiers, a few officers and one or two field generals. Coaching Soccer Legends is a new and unique way of developing all players into great soccer players so that teams can enjoy many different ways of creating and scoring goals. A combination of educational theory, logic and physical education principles, plus 30 years of coaching experience has been used when assessing the best ways to teach the unique “Soccer Legend” function. Young players need tremendous skill, fantastic tactical speed and a high self-concept in order to dominate the game. Yet there is no in-depth information available that clearly demonstrates how to achieve this and, due to the prevalent focus on winning and team play, most players never realize their individual potential. Realizing the goal of becoming an effective “Soccer Legend” is not initially everyone’s cup of tea. The challenges posed by the role present numerous and significant problems that can seem overwhelming at times. For the great “Soccer Legend” to emerge, a large number of diverse yet complimentary physical and mental leadership characteristics have to become as natural as breathing. For anyone wanting to become a truly great player, or just to understand the challenges of the role, the information in this book will serve as a road map and a reference tool.

Reading this book can be justified in numerous ways. As a player, teacher, parent or spectator you will become more knowledgeable about the creativity, character, toughness, intelligence and physical fitness needed to be a great “Soccer Legend” and how to be a part of or create an excellent team. You will hone your understanding of what it takes to build instant perception, self-confidence, technical brilliance and amazing tactical speed. You will learn to appreciate how a team containing multiple players with these abilities will eventually dominate ball possession plus the creation and finishing of goal-scoring opportunities. The material in this book is a new and unique recipe for individual and team success. The “Training Soccer Legends” methodology is well explained, argued and easy to understand. Fulfilling the role of field general requires great creative technical ability and an understanding of when, where and how to penetrate opposing defenses. In the chapters that follow you will find a complete description of how to maximize physical and mental learning factors with optimum motivation and fun along the way. Optimum growth depends on constantly treading the right path. An athletic career is already shortened to great degree by aging so there’s not a moment to waste. The fastest improvement depends on constantly refining the technical, tactical, physical and mental aspects of performance, in the manner that gets the player from the starting point to the objective, in the quickest time. When reading and evaluating the material in this publication you will gain a totally new insight with regard to the challenges of, and solutions to, the complex role of the ball wizard field general. If the end result is that you are a better soccer player, parent or coach then any effort to spread the “Training Soccer Legends” word has been worthwhile.
The ability of the ball carrier is unquestionably the biggest single positive factor in a great team’s
attack. It is an indisputable axiom that the more talented the ball carriers and finishers, the better
the team’s attacking chances. Teams without talented ball carriers and finishers find it almost
impossible to win at the highest level. What’s more, the player without great ball handling and
striking skills finds it almost impossible to progress to a higher level by earning a college
scholarship or stepping up to the professional game. The ideal ball carrier should be a mix of the
great football quarterback, the baseball “no hit” pitcher and the high scoring, deceptive dribbling
point guard in basketball. He merges the coolness of the assassin, the tactical foresight of the
chess maestro, the creative artistry of the grandmaster painter plus the combative spirit and
skilled execution of the champion gladiator. He is confident and self-assured under pressure and
believes in his ability to make the big plays that win games. The team with the most “Soccer
Legends” will enjoy the greater opportunity for success. Developing a team stacked with great
dribblers and finishers increases the chance of dominating games. When in possession of the
ball, the field general is the engine of the car and nerve center of the team. He is the crucial
factor, the hub of the wheel. He is the hard drive, microchip and motherboard of the computer all
rolled into one. He fuses players to each other, links the defense to the midfield, the midfield to
the forwards and converts possession in the final third into goals. There is no other role in soccer
as stressful, important and ultimately crucial as that of the ball wizard and a team stacked with
ball wizards is one to be feared.

“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live
more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to
enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.”
Woodrow Wilson

There are no shortcuts to becoming an exceptional ball wizard because that responsibility
involves ever-changing circumstances and solutions. The game is a continuous, fluid, ever
evolving, fast moving equation that requires years of study, experience and practice with ever
increasing creative problem solving at speed. Becoming a field general demands commitment,
dedication and a passionate desire to lead that constantly grows as the player feels his ability to
dominate each game growing and expanding. More importantly, becoming a field general
involves pursuing a course of action that wastes no time on unnecessary training with marginal
positive consequences. A total commitment to the “Training Soccer Legends” approach is
guaranteed to develop all the essential characteristics and components of the field general to the
maximum possible potential of each individual involved in the minimum possible time. Open
your mind and leave your biases behind because you are about to encounter the training
philosophy of the future. After reading “Training Soccer Legends” your soccer perspective will
never be the same again.

“It is change, continuing change, inevitable change, that is the dominant factor in society today.
No sensible decision can be made any longer without taking into account not only the world as it
is, but the world as it will be...This, in turn, means that our statesmen, our businessmen, our
everyman must take on a science fictional way of thinking.”
Isaac Asimov
Introduction

“No matter if a tree grows to more than a hundred feet in height, each leaf, every day, must return to its roots for nourishment.”
Chinese Buddhist proverb

Sports and recreations are among the most revealing mirrors of many societies. They offer a distinctive insight into social patterns, cultural values and even economic conditions. It is difficult to think of a modern society in which sport in its widest sense does not occupy an important role and indeed where it has not taken on the trappings of a major, nation-wide industry. This applies to no sport more than the world’s most popular participant and spectator team game, Association Football or “Soccer”.

Whether in the land of my birth - England, or my adopted home - the USA, where it has evolved from its rude beginnings to the sophisticated sport we are familiar with today, many authorities have considered soccer worthy of literary comment. Numerous books and magazines give news of soccer playing heroes past and present. Many publications detail basic techniques and attempt to relate these to the game situation. A lesser number examine the “in depth” issues from a highly technical and tactical point of view. However, none of the published material serves as a comprehensive creative rationale, skill based coaching aid and leadership enhancing curriculum from the first stage of involvement at age 3 or 4 to age 18. This is the point at which all serious soccer players should be fully immersed in the adult game and able to play it as a form of art.

“Art is a deliberate recreation of a new and special reality that grows from your response to life. It cannot be copied; it must be created.”
Anonymous

Stimulated by the lack of specific reference material and the lack of a curriculum designed to develop truly creative players, this study aims to help the coach understand what truly developmental flair founded coaching entails and to further this understanding plus expand the dictates of modern day knowledge, by highlighting the hitherto obscure factors which influence the learning child to maximize his or her creativity in the soccer situation. The book will then build upon this foundation by providing a sequential progression from key points of dribbling and finishing technique, through enjoyable intermediate skill practices, to practice situations that are so complicated that they make actual games seem easy.

“Creativity represents a miraculous coming together of the uninhibited energy of the child with its apparent opposite and enemy, the sense of order imposed on the disciplined adult intelligence.”
Norman Podhoretz

In order to assist the coach in getting the best out of players numerous theory areas of primary importance are discussed. This essential theoretical basis will be followed by comprehensive
practical chapters plus many coaching aids and tips for maximizing development. The later part of the book will detail the full Legends curriculum with intense focus on two technical areas of paramount importance, i.e. the skills of creative dribbling and finishing. As a result, the total study not only provides immensely valuable advice for specialist soccer coaches it also provides essential information for teachers, youth leaders, team managers, interested parents, players and all other individuals concerned with understanding the best way to develop soccer skill in young players of all ages. Its strengths lie in its sound theoretical basis plus its thorough, enjoyment and flair based approach to the practical dimensions of soccer coaching. With creativity and passion as its central theme the “Training Soccer Legends” method includes a skill related fun game as an integral part of every training session for players aged 14 or younger.

“A product is creative when it is (a) novel and (b) appropriate. A novel product is original not predictable. The bigger the concept, and the more the product stimulates further work and ideas, the more the product is creative.”
Sternberg & Lubart - Defying the Crowd

The final message of this introduction is arguably the most important. In youth soccer the coach is many things to many people. The coach is a trainer, psychologist, philosopher, guardian, but above all a teacher, a creator of problem solving attitudes and 100% effort habits for life. Every word, action and manner is observed and evaluated, whether by players, parents, the opposing team and coach, or the community. The coach must set the correct example and strive at all times to make the players vastly more skillful and prepared. As a result he will make the game more enjoyable, participation more rewarding and provide his players with greater opportunities to get the most out of the “beautiful game”.

The sky’s the limit!
Chapter One

Recent History and Coaching Trends

Until fairly recently the only full-time paid soccer coaches were employed in professional or college soccer. Youth coaches were fathers with a child on the team or philanthropic volunteers with a passion for the game. Until 1989 when I became the first coach in Kansas City to make my total living from youth soccer coaching, I had never met anyone in soccer who earned their whole paycheck from coaching multiple youth teams. That does not mean that there wasn't anyone else out there filling that role but it does mean that not many people were doing it. This is perhaps surprising because the United States has an educated and enlightened attitude to coaching and the length of formal education traditionally enjoyed by coaches in the U.S. far exceeds that of the rest of the world. Therefore, although the United States does not have the soccer history and tradition evident in other countries, players in the U.S. are more likely to enjoy the benefit of intelligent and rational coaching philosophies that have been strengthened by a solid educational background. Furthermore, as opposed to the rest of the world where soccer is a working class sport, American soccer is middle to upper class in nature meaning that soccer parents in general are somewhat better educated and informed than the average individual and significantly better educated and informed than their counterparts in other countries. In the rest of the world where soccer is more of a working class sport the likelihood of the soccer parent or coach having enjoyed a collegiate education is much lower.

When analyzing the status of the world's youth coaching literature and theory it becomes easier to understand why coaching philosophy for players between the ages of 4 and 16 is both embryonic yet antiquated. This may seem like a contradiction, however it is embryonic because coaching at the youth level is immature in its methods, rationale and objectives. It is also antiquated because youth soccer coaching and literature about the topic, in some format, has been around for the best part of a century. But, just as in life where most change is resisted forcefully, so it is with "modern" soccer around since the 1800's but still, from the teaching perspective, little understood and often neglected.

_The world hates change yet it is the only thing that has brought progress._

Charles Kettering

Thankfully that is changing rapidly as more coaches make their full-time career from coaching a limited number of youth teams. This is because the coach can now focus entirely on the young player and no longer has to split time between his "real" job and his love for soccer. Unfortunately for kids most of the U.S.S.F. and U.E.F.A staff coaches come from the professional or collegiate coaching environment. Very few of these individuals have true long-term immersion in youth coaching at the earlier age and ability levels. Sadly, most coaches who have coached or played at the higher adult level mistakenly believe they know the best methods for developing the young player. This can be likened to the college lecturer who has never taught
young children claiming to be an excellent kindergarten teacher. The available coaching literature illustrates the lack of deep thought and experience in the matter of young player development. “Training Soccer Legends” is designed to stimulate thought in a way that no youth coaching book has ever done before. The methods described here are guaranteed to develop the young person with reasonably athletic genetic imprint into a dominant player with phenomenal creative genius. Years of complete dedication to youth soccer development have provided me with a fresh perspective that, in many ways, refutes the established reactionary coaching school methods. Youth coaching and preparation of players for the highest levels of play need to undergo a total metamorphosis from the current mode of identification of problems and “quick fix” solutions, to an educational curriculum that builds gradually and sequentially to develop highly skilled, deceptive, creative and disciplined players. Because it focuses on developing players who can dominate the ball and the opponent the approach detailed in this book will benefit your players to the maximum degree whether you coach recreational soccer or a professional club youth program.
Chapter Two

The Reasoning That Can’t Be Denied

Rethinking Soccer Coaching

From time to time all “Training Soccer Legends” coaches have to deal with questions relating to a more team oriented approach to the game of soccer. Therefore, it is important that coaches have the ability to explain their short, mid and long term plans for players and teams. During the course of my career I have coached teams ranging from 4 and 5 year olds to adults. Over the decades this has spanned all standards of play from recreational youth soccer to collegiate teams and has included 22 players that eventually were drafted to play on professional teams. For over 16 years I have directed the KC Legends club and personally coached teams with players ranging from ages 4 to 18. This has allowed me to analyze and test my methods on an ongoing basis and has given me the luxury of identifying weaknesses in the older players that I can coach into strengths in the younger players. It is this background that constantly reaffirms the necessity for an exclusive emphasis on the most difficult individual dribbling and finishing techniques at the younger ages and stages. These skills need to be mastered effectively, therefore the process of improvement should continue throughout a player’s career. However, as players become more technically accomplished the emphasis will gradually switch from the most difficult individual techniques, i.e. dribbling and shooting, to the most difficult team concept, i.e. that of combining deceptive approach play with one and two touch passing and finishing.

If we analyze the logic of this approach we will realize that the total creative individual approach rewards us with maximum dividends when the kids are young because it involves relatively little conceptualization of abstract patterns off the ball. This is an area of great difficulty for the youngster, therefore emphasizing 3D soccer concepts before the young mind is ready will result in great frustration and de-motivation of players. This is analogous to teaching calculus to 1st graders. It is way beyond their immature stage of psychological ability to conceptualize. Obviously, if we battered the calculus into child #1’s head over a significant period of time he would learn it quicker than the next child who had spent no time at all on it. However, if child #2 studied calculus at age 16 he would pick it up in a fraction of the time taken by child #1 who learned it at a younger age. This is the case with passing and support play in soccer. As long as the technical ability to hold the ball under pressure, (deceptive dribbling), and strike the ball cleanly with accuracy, (finishing), has been acquired when young, players will learn what to look for and when to look for it as they mature. Therefore, it makes sense to concentrate on the most difficult techniques and skills at an early stage because these can actually be learned more effectively in a shorter period of time when the athlete is younger. Furthermore, these skills provide the platform for subsequent individual and team brilliance. The core coaching priority is attaining maximum economy of training or in other words maximizing individual potential in the minimum time.
With the “Training Soccer Legends” approach we have seen phenomenal development in the all round ability to take players on using the most effective and difficult moves yet invented, plus the ability to finish a greater percentage of our chances with well struck and aimed shots. As coaches our staff have rejected the accepted belief that one should start by coaching simple technical skills and work up to the more difficult technical skills. We begin by learning difficult fakes and shooting techniques as the first priority. This has resulted in teams full of technically gifted players that are the "talk of the town". As the kids mature we have taken this approach one step further because we gradually move from demanding that players hold the ball and perform a fake on each possession, to giving equal value to the performance of penetrating one and two touch passes and shots. This is accomplished by including penetrative dribbling, one and two touch finishing and one and two touch passing in 2 v 2 small-sided games. The logic here is that these skills are the most difficult that a player will ever have to perform. Therefore, once these have been mastered everything else in the game will seem easy by comparison.

The other conclusive justification for this approach is that there are two types of teams that are extremely difficult to defend against. One is the team full of gifted dribblers and finishers and the other is the team with great first time passers and finishers. It is my belief that by working extensively on both methods of penetration during the latter stages of youth development, our coaches will be able to develop players and teams that have mastered them and are virtually unstoppable. However, this will only occur if we first concentrate on the individual technical development and move gradually into combining this ball wizardry with the most difficult combination play tactics and one touch finishing as the players mature.
Chapter Three

The Unique Legends Frame of Reference

As an introduction to this section I would like you to read the following sentence and count the number of F’s it contains. There is no trick to this exercise. All you have to do is read the sentence slowly one time, count the instances of the letter F as you go, and remember the final total.

THE FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE FULFILLING EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS

Have you completed the above exercise? If the answer is no, please go back and total the F’s in the sentence before reading on.

If you have completed the exercise, you are in the vast majority if you counted only five F’s. Some of you will have six or seven F’s. Those of you who have the correct answer will most probably have read the sentence more than once. The correct answer is that there are eight F’s in the sentence. One F is contained in each of the words “finished”, “files” and “scientific”, two are contained in the word “fulfilling” while the other three are in the word “of”.

While this is an interesting exercise you may be asking, “what’s the point”? In answer to that question I would like to explain why so many of us fail to count all the F’s contained within the word “of”. The reason we don’t count them is because we read phonetically and an F contained within the word “of” is pronounced with the phonetic characteristics of a V, whereas the other F’s in the sentence are pronounced with the phonetic characteristics expected of an F. Because of this we have erected a subconscious barrier to any F that is pronounced as a V.

This gives us a good example of a barrier erected as a result of lifelong experience.

The following is another example of how the human mind works from a preset frame of reference:

Don't ignore this just because it looks weird. Believe it or not, you can read it.

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulaclty uesdnatmrd waht I was ardnieg. The phaomnmeal pweor of the hmuan mind. Aoccdinng to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmntnt tihtng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can stilr rd it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not rd ervey ltter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh?
“Today the world changes so quickly that in growing up we take leave not just of youth but of the world we were young in. Fear and resentment of what is new is really a lament for the memories of our childhood.”
Sir Peter Medawar

**Famous and Later Regretted Quotes**
The following famous quotes by very intelligent experts within their field, provide a further example of the barriers and boundaries even the most brilliant people erect in their own psyche:

“I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.”
*Thomas Watson, Chairman of IBM, 1943*

“But what is it good for?”
*Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1968, commenting on the microchip.*

“There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home.”
*Ken Olson, President, Chairman and Founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977*

“This ‘telephone’ has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us.”
*Western Union internal memo, 1876*

“Who the hell wants to hear actors talk.”
*H.M. Warner, Warner Brothers, 1927*

“I’m just glad it’ll be Clark Gable who’s falling on his face and not Gary Cooper.”
*Gary Cooper on his decision not to take the leading role in “Gone With The Wind.”*

“We don’t like their sound and guitar music is on the way out.”
*Decca Recording Co. rejecting the Beatles, 1962.*

“Heavier than air flying machines are impossible.”
*Lord Kelvin, President, Royal Society, 1895.*

“Stocks have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau.”
*Irving Fisher, Professor of Economics, Yale University, 1929.*

“Airplanes are interesting toys but are of no military value”.
*Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy, Ecole Superieure de Guerre.*

“Everything that can be invented has been invented.”
“The abdomen, the chest, and the brain will forever be shut from the intrusion of the wise and humane surgeon”.
Sir John Eric Ericksen, British surgeon, appointed Surgeon Extraordinary to Queen Victoria 1873.

“640K ought to be enough memory for anybody.”
Bill Gates, 1981

Dr Stephen Covey the author of “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People,” talks about paradigms. The word paradigm means “frame of reference”. All of the above people were and, in some cases still are, experts within their field. All made these statements based upon their frame of reference at the time. The weakness in this approach is that a frame of reference or paradigm is history based and, therefore, non-visionary in nature.

Sam Walter Foss, who died in 1911, penned the following rambling rhyme that truly captures the essence of mindless conformity:

“One day through the primeval wood, a calf walked home, as good calves should,
But made a trail all bent askew, a crooked trail as all calves do.
Since then two hundred years have fled, and, I infer, the calf is dead.
But still he leaves behind his trail, and thereby hangs my moral tale.
The trail was taken up next day, by a lone dog that passed that way;
And then a wise bellwether sheep, pursued the trail o’er vale and steep
And drew the flock behind him too, as good bellwethers always do.
And from that day o’er hill and glade, through those old woods a path was made;
And many men wound in and out, and dodged, and turned, and bent about
And uttered words of righteous wrath, because ‘twas such a crooked path.
But still they followed, do not laugh, the first migrations of the calf;
And through his winding wood-way stalked, because he wobbled when he walked.
This forest path became a lane, that bent, and turned, and turned again;
This crooked lane became a road, where many a poor horse with his load
Toiled underneath the burning sun, and traveled some three miles in one,
And thus a century and a half, they trod the footsteps of that calf.
The years passed on in swiftness fleet, the road became a village street;
And this before men were aware, a city’s crowded thoroughfare;
And soon the central street was this, of a renowned metropolis;
And men two centuries and a half, trod in the footsteps of that calf;
Each day a hundred thousand rout, followed the zigzag calf about;
And o’er this crooked journey went, the traffic of a continent.
A hundred thousand men were led, by one calf near three centuries dead.
They followed still his crooked way, at least one hundred years a day;
For thus such reverence is lent, to well established precedent.
A moral lesson this might teach, were I ordained and called to preach;
For men are prone to go it blind, along the calf-paths of the mind,
And work away from sun to sun, to do what other men have done.  
They followed in the beaten track, and out and in and forth and back,  
And still their devious course pursue, to keep the path that others do.  
But how the wise old wood-gods laugh, who saw that first primeval calf!  
Ah! Many things this tale might teach, but I am not ordained to preach.”  
Sam Walter Foss

“Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist.”  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

**What Has This To Do With Soccer?**

The purpose of this is to challenge the reader to accept that even the most brilliant minds in their fields of expertise have preset frames of reference that are incorrect and have made horrendous errors of judgment. I hope that the modern day proponents of the “Flat Earth” theory of soccer coaching will recognize that, while much of what is written here is very controversial, it makes ultimate logical sense and has been proven to work by the successes of Kansas City Legends players trained in this way. By beginning with the 5F exercise, the misspelled words and the famous foolish quotes, my goal is to get the reader to understand that, while we don’t realize that we have irrational biases, or ways of seeing things, we are all socially conditioned products of our environments, and have been brainwashed to think in certain conventional ways. Unfortunately for most soccer cultures, (except perhaps Brazilian and many African), most modern day coaching and even pick up soccer environments have been heavily weighted toward passing and team play, instead of the development of individual brilliance.

In life there are many similar paradigms and barriers. We are all conditioned by the environment, and society we grow up in, plus our role models. Because of the pressures and expectations we have been subjected to on a daily basis throughout our lives, we sometimes reject things that are extremely rational and believable. Many of us have been conditioned by our personal societal training to think only in the terms dictated by that conditioning. Just as most individuals brought up in a traditional religious environment believe in the existence of God, so most individuals born and brought up in an atheist or agnostic society, such as modern day Cuba, do not believe that God exists or in the existence of any type of all knowing deity.

*The creative individual has the capacity to free himself from the web of social pressures in which the rest of us are caught. He is capable of questioning the assumptions that the rest of us accept.*  
John W. Gardner

Soccer is a classic study of the power of this conditioning process. In most Northern European nations there has been an over-riding coaching emphasis on the tactical ways to win the game. In South America and most African nations there has been a far greater emphasis on creative technical development. In Northern Europe most technical training has focused on the teamwork and cooperation skills of passing and receiving. In South America and many African nations there has been more focus on dribbling and finishing. This may have much to do with the more creative and eclectic nature of South American and African society. Or it may be that players
have been left to develop naturally without analysis and coaching of how to win games interfering with the creative, developmental process. The reality probably involves a number of factors. However, it is a fact that social conditioning of some form or other encourages a more creative style of play in South America and Africa and a more disciplined, team oriented, style of play in Northern Europe. As more and more players are imported into the Northern European game from South America and Africa, the extreme differences between the two soccer cultures may well begin to disappear. However, due to the force of historical habit, it will be many decades in all soccer cultures before the coaching community has a full understanding of, and experience in, developing players of creative brilliance.

“To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.”
Sir Winston Churchill

I was brought up in a classic British receive and pass coaching mentality. No focus at all was given toward individual creativity. Dribble was a dirty word. Players that held the ball and used dribbling moves were “Posers”. In the U.S. they are called, “Hot Dogs” or “Ball Hogs”. On all of my British teams every player had a distinct and limited role to play. My role as a full back was to operate almost totally as a destroyer. Therefore, I spent no time on shooting or dribbling practice because it was rarely if ever going to be a “needed” skill for my position. This is a classic example of a set frame of reference that rendered me permanently incapable of ever playing with great creativity and, for a while, of appreciating the value of each player needing the ability to dribble creatively when appropriate.

Luckily I became a decent player because of my non-coached soccer experience. Here’s a post from Mike Saif’s World Class Coaching website (www.worldclasscoaching.com) that best describes the soccer learning situation that most influenced my career.

“The good things about street football were....
1. Everyone was included (THAT CHANGES WHEN ADULTS GET INVOLVED)
2. Loads of playing time and touches of the ball.
3. Free-play, creativity.
4. Playing in loads of different positions so you see the games from many angles.
5. No proper goals, kit etc so you used your imagination.
6. Games from 1 a side to 20 a side.
7. Play on different surfaces, grass, tarmac, concrete, dirt, carpet and sand.
8. Play with and against lots of different kids and different ages (had to use technique and insight against the big kids)
9. Lots of different balls, leather (lace up) plastic, rubber, tennis balls, balloons, stones, cans.
10. Street games, kerbies, 3 and in, spot, cross bar challenge
11. ENJOYMENT so kids kept playing
12. Kids agenda not adults.”
Cooperman
In North America the Northern European influence in soccer has been significant. Perhaps to the detriment of the game, the Northern European model of play is the example that most North Americans have copied. The reasons for this are obvious. Firstly, English is the primary language. Secondly, there has been a tremendous influx of European professional players and coaches into the U.S. over the last four decades since the inception of the NASL and the boom in summer soccer camps. These days it is rare to find a College or youth club coach who wasn’t influenced significantly by a Brit’ or Northern European at some stage of his or her development.

The problem with this situation is the same one as the above sentence with the 8 F’s. Most of the North American and Northern European game is over coached and has been conditioned to accept that the two primary technical skills of soccer are receiving and passing. In accepting this we are all missing a lot of the F’s. In other words we are forgetting the importance of dribbling and finishing. If the game in North America and Northern Europe is eventually going to rival the South American model of at least four decades of dominance, we must overcome our “societal conditioning” and incorporate the developmental factors that have made the South American game more successful into our system or perhaps change the system completely to promote more creativity. While on this subject, it should be recognized that South American success has been achieved with the involvement of far fewer countries and total participants than Europe.

“Man is a creature of hope and invention, both of which belie the idea that things cannot be changed.”
Tom Clancy (Debt of Honor)

I hope that this introduction is beginning to break down some of the barriers you may have toward a truly creative coaching methodology. Let us begin with the hypothesis that, from a developmental perspective, the South American model is better than that found in Northern Europe. But, let us strive to improve upon that model by combining the South American model, with the strengths of the North American system. The North American system develops the most coachable and self disciplined player in the world. However, there is no reason why that coachability and self-discipline cannot be retained while being enhanced by a more creative developmental approach.

As Danny Cox, the author of “Seize the Day” notes, “We would do our children, our fellow human beings, our students, our employees and ourselves a better service if we acknowledged the value of creativity and invested the extra effort to make room for creativity in our daily lives. By creating an environment that encourages and supports uniqueness, creativity becomes part of our lifestyle at home, at school, at work and at play. The high-performance person seeks to maintain a creative flow in his or her life at all times. When creativity is part and parcel of your everyday affairs, life is never dull and you’re usually much more productive. Creativity fuels performance by drawing constantly on that reservoir of undeveloped strengths that each of us has within us. Creativity flourishes in an environment of experimentation, playfulness & spontaneous behavior.”
The game in North America has never known the phenomenon called “street soccer” that is folklore in the older soccer generations from other countries. Here in the U.S. the game is more organized. Practices are scheduled events not spontaneous gatherings. Because of this there has been a loss of creativity. Players are always expected to conform to the wishes of the coach. And, as we have discussed above, those wishes have been overly biased toward passing and teamwork.

“When Alexander the Great visited Diogenes and asked whether he could do anything for the famed teacher, Diogenes replied: ‘Only stand out of my light.’ Perhaps some day we shall know how to heighten creativity. Until then, one of the best things we can do for creative men and women is to stand out of their light.”

John W Gardner

Natural individual creativity in this atmosphere has been restricted and in many cases, completely stifled. However, it doesn't have to be this way. It is possible to run practices that, with the help of the coach, are more creative, more fun, more developmental and more motivational than previously conceived. All that is needed is a change in perception, a desire to emphasize the more difficult creative skills, a willingness to allow young players the opportunity to take risks and lose the ball while learning how to dominate it, and a commitment to the long-term goal of incredible individual skill and tremendous speed of play.

“You cannot step twice into the same river; for other waters are continually flowing in.”

Heraclitus

“Progress is a nice word. But change is its motivator. And change has enemies.”

Robert F. Kennedy

**Important Quick Note:** As a conclusion to this section I would like to end the beginning of this book with a vision. My vision is North American soccer combining its current strengths of organization, strong youth infrastructure and recognition of the importance of coaching, with the best methods of developing the complete creative and disciplined player. My contention is that we can emulate and incorporate the best from the rest of the world and, because we are open minded, highly educated and developmentally motivated, we can structure a program that will promote and teach the more difficult creative components of the game. This will result in individual and team excellence, leading eventually to success at the highest levels of world soccer.

“Man needs, for his happiness, not only the enjoyment of this or that, but hope and enterprise and change.”

Bertrand Russell

“Change is not made without inconvenience, even from worse to better.”

Richard Hooker
Chapter Four
Creative Team Unity and Harmony

To stimulate thought I’d like to challenge you, the reader, with some thought provoking quotes as follows:

“Soccer is like a short blanket. When you cover the head you expose the toes. When you cover the feet you uncover the head. If you commit to the attack you expose your defense if you focus on defense you rob your attack.”
Jorge Valdano – Technical Director – Real Madrid

Now this is the law of the jungle as old and as true as the sky
And the wolves that keep it may prosper but the wolves that break it must die.
As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk the law runneth forward and back
And the strength of the pack is the wolf and the strength of the wolf is the pack.
Rudyard Kipling - English Poet/Novelist

“Go for broke” is usually associated with taking a risk, of gambling on the unpredictable situation, of shooting the works, even of putting one’s own pride and reputation on the line. Consistent winners refuse to wait for breaks to happen. The unexpected is part of their game plan and they thrive on the element of surprise. They’ll “go for broke” anytime, anywhere. Their performance implies that there is no tomorrow.
Jack Whittaker - Sports Broadcaster

“When I first started coaching, I had an idea on how to produce winners. I had my mind set on having our wrestlers practice the moves our way. We would pick out certain high percentage moves and practice them over and over. Our wrestlers learned the moves. In matches, we’d allow them to perform only this short check-list of high-percentage moves. It sounded good in theory and for some of our wrestlers it worked. But for the most part, we were restricting our guys, for we didn’t allow their individual talents to develop. In short, we made them robots. So we changed. We realized that many, (probably most), of our wrestlers had more ability, and we were more talented than our coaching staff had ever been in school. We still taught our wrestlers the high percentage moves, but at the same time we allowed them to develop winning styles, based on instinct of their own. We let them have fun and told them to “Go For It”. It worked tremendously. Now the matches were no longer high-pressure events done “our way”. They became “Show Time” performances based on gut instinct with each wrestler’s unique talents and abilities dominating. The results were amazing. We became winners and morale was never higher. We’ve coached young men who have become better athletes and wrestlers than we ever deemed possible since we made the decision to “Go For It.”
Howard Ferguson Wrestling Coach – St Edward High School, Lakewood, Ohio
Winner – 7 National High School Championships
Creation Versus Reaction

Creation and reaction have the same letters. They are anagrams. Each step along our journey we are faced with a choice either to create or react. Many coaches teach their players to spend the whole game reacting. Like defenders playing against a skillful team under pressure they react. In life we react to circumstances, headlines, events, family problems and challenges. However, there’s a better way to exist. This encompasses choosing ones path, planning ahead and adhering to the plan. It demands a conscious choice to create. Creation occurs when we envisage, predict, plan and act. Great coaches grasp that setting goals, developing a vision of the future and establishing a curriculum that achieves the ultimate objectives, saves time. Yet most coaches change their practice content and plan weekly based on what occurred in the previous game and their desire to win quickly. Great coaches who think about development strategically are able to picture a range of actions that guarantee the achievement of the long-range goal. The vision developed leads to the teaching of creative techniques, tactics and strategies that the players will need and use at the very highest levels of performance. Great coaches are future focused and will work strategically by investing their efforts in the development of players who are individually capable of playing at the highest levels and collectively capable of making a positive contribution to the future success of any team they play for. Failing to have a long-term creative curriculum and falling into the trap of reacting dissipates focus and energy on trivial items, mistaken agendas and hopeless crusades. The coach who does this becomes a dabbler and wastes time on the trivia instead of solid, well planned, rewarding, personal and team growth.

Building Creative Team Unity and Harmony

When properly understood, creative team unity and harmony are two of the most important components of the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy. Putting all the individual brilliance together to create a team of truly unique individual creative talent and team cooperation is the ultimate objective. The highest forms of creative unity and harmony utilize the four “Training Soccer Legends” soccer components of creative technical, chaotic tactical, specific physical and clutch psychological to exploit new opportunities that didn’t previously exist. The Legends philosophy of building toward creative unity and harmony triggers and releases the highest powers of the individual and the team. It allows the team to achieve things not previously deemed possible by solidifying a highly talented and prepared group of individuals into a team of brilliance where the sum of the whole is much greater than the cumulative addition of its parts. This is the most electrifying yet frightening aspect of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach because the coach doesn’t know what is going to happen. It is the players who conquer the challenges in their own unique, improvisational ways. Meanwhile the coach gradually makes practice more complicated and challenging without restricting creative options. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is unscripted freedom of thought and action. It takes an amazing amount of self-confidence and security on the part of both players and coaches to allow this to happen because this approach defines the risk of pioneering, the spirit of adventure, the joy of discovery and the establishment of new horizons. The player trained in this method becomes a swashbuckling pirate of the soccer field, robbing defenders of their security and exposing their weaknesses by the most adventurous and creative means possible. Creative unity and harmony floods through a team prepared in this manner, thereby building a fluid structure that allows each
individual to share in flair based leadership that totally confuses their opponents. Better still, its effectiveness is not reliant upon defensive errors because an offense that combines technical brilliance with phenomenal tactical speed can score against a defense that makes no mistakes. All this flows from the creative independence inherent with the Legends method, plus the elevated level of confidence and high self-concept that goes hand in hand with a tremendous level of individual skill and tactical speed. Because of the tremendous independent creativity and deception of the players they can mature into a team of incredible interdependence and perform tasks as a group that are far beyond the ability and concept of teams trained in the outdated, antiquated, purely pass and receive mentality favored by the protective, fearful, low risk, win oriented coach. It is time we all adopted an approach that is less defensive, apprehensive, judgmental and conservative in favor of a methodology that is more progressive, creative, liberating and unifying. Through this approach we can truly create the “Team of Brilliance”.

“The nature of innovation—the inherent definition of innovation—has changed today from what it was in the past. It’s no longer individuals toiling in a laboratory, coming up with some great invention. It’s not an individual. It’s individuals. It’s multidisciplinary. It’s global. It’s collaborative.”

Sam Palmisano, Chairman, President and CEO, IBM

Only when players have experienced long-term practice in the high-risk stages of the Legends approach can they hope to interact with creative harmony and unity. Getting to this point in the developmental process involves constant loss of possession and negative statistical game results. However, without these essential possession and statistical risks and negative game results there can be no ultimate reward. One cannot discover new continents and enjoy new horizons without leaving the comfort of the home shores, encountering the occasional storm and experiencing regular setbacks. When playing with creative unity and harmony the coach and players are not sure how things will work out, what the result will be or whether they will achieve their statistical goals. However, they will experience the reward of constant improvement and their play will confuse, intimidate and frighten their opponents. In the tradition of Brazil they may, as they mature, lose the odd game to a lesser skilled or less creative opponent, but it will be the exception rather than the rule.

“Many people know so little about what is beyond their short range of experience. They look within themselves--and find nothing! Therefore they conclude that there is nothing outside themselves either.”

Helen Keller

Players trained to enter the “Zone of Altered Consciousness” through the Training Soccer Legends method will enjoy vastly improved vision and greater motivation generated by a higher level of mutual learning and perception. As with most processes of discovery this will, in turn, result in further learning and perceptual development. Most teams experience little creative harmony and unity due to the training methods employed by their coaches and their regimented interaction with teammates. They have been rote brain washed into a safe yet stilted passing and receiving approach where individualism and risk are sins of the highest order. Such players reach
a point of inertia where they are totally dependent on their teammates and individually inadequate. Their self-concept and spirit breaks apart on the barriers to creative development erected by their win-oriented coaches. They get little opportunity to experience even a modicum of creative individuality, therefore, creative harmony is but a ship passing in the night or a unrealistic fantasy that is the preserve of the ultra-gifted athlete lucky enough to be endowed with genetic talents beyond the reach of the average mortal. However, the truth is that there are thousands of children worldwide who are capable of reaching the heights of a Pele, Maradona or Ronaldo. Unfortunately they are robbed of their potential by well meaning adults who do not understand that creative harmony and unity has to be preceded by extreme levels of independent individualism. These coaches have never conceptualized the amazing sporting opportunities that can be enjoyed by rejecting the importance of the team win and first embracing the individual developmental win. Because so much latent potential remains dormant, stunted and redundant, this represents the greatest tragedy and waste in sports. Enthusiastic, well meaning, but ineffective coaches, limit and restrict the potential of their players day after day, with a total lack of awareness of the damage they do and the opportunity their players are missing. They may regiment a degree of synergy into their teams by drilling and grilling the passing game but they are at war with a limited arsenal of weapons, therefore when faced with the Brazil’s of the international soccer world, or the “Legends” trained teams of the youth soccer world, will be forced to wave the white flag in abject surrender to the creative weaponry developed by a more flair based ethos aligned with superior positive teaching methods and philosophies.

"Habit is the denial of creativity and the negation of freedom; a self-imposed straitjacket of which the wearer is unaware."

Arthur Koestler

Traditional coaches may have memories of arenas in which they enjoyed great harmony and unity of purpose for a short while. They may recall team experiences and work projects that for a brief time gave them a feeling of belonging and working for a team goal that transcended anything they had ever felt as an individual. Consequently they attempt to reproduce these nebulous positive memories by spending weeks, months and years grilling and drilling the team aspects of the game without understanding that creative individualism precedes inter-dependence and must be developed to a tremendous level of acuity before the creative unity of team brilliance can become believable and achievable. To a great percentage of these coaches their brief memories of team unity and positive group achievement make these experiences unusual anomalies and therefore whims of fate rather than planned and regularly attainable occurrences.

However, players can enjoy these positive, defining, soccer and life experiences on a daily, weekly & monthly basis with the right training and example if their coaches are brave enough to pursue the “Training Soccer Legends” high risk strategies and curriculum. This enlightened approach develops great individual feelings of personal achievement and worth, plus an associated appreciation of higher personal potential. This motivates every player to further effort and pursuit of soccer excellence.
“When one has finished building one's house, one suddenly realizes that in the process one has learned something that one really needed to know in the worst way--before one began.”
Friedrich Nietzsche

Following the creative risk path to higher achievement is a trial and error, hit and miss approach to problem solving. Most coaches find it frustrating, unpredictable and, to a certain degree, frightening. Most humans need conformity, routine and established habit in their daily lives. This “comfort zone” approach provides a security blanket to help them face the world. Unpredictability makes them nervous and insecure so they choose the “stay at home” methods of the conservative masses. Thus, even when confronted with a shining example of the creative individualism and later team unity, harmony and success inherent within Brazilian soccer, they experience a negative “knee jerk” rejection of the lessons of Brazil’s creative soccer culture.

"There is an artist within each person, and everybody has the capacity to find creative genius in themselves."
Annette Moser-Wellman, founder of FireMark

I have come to believe that truly great practice sessions teeter on the very edge of anarchy and resemble a form of semi-organized chaos. At the start of the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum comes structured technical learning of the game’s most creative and difficult skills, then comes a period of experimentation in practices and games under ever increasing 1 v 1 pressure. Eventually the players graduate to incredibly difficult and chaotic “speed chess on grass” involved in multiple simultaneous games of 2 v 2 soccer with a myriad of complicating conditions in very crowded areas. Gradually the creative unity and harmony transformation evolves into a collective elevation of both the individual and team perception and performance.

“Creativity is fostered in organizational cultures that value independent thinking, risk taking, and learning. They are tolerant of failure and they value diversity. Open communication is reinforced and there is a high degree of trust and respect between individuals.”
Rose

The end result is a realization of personal and group superiority and a belief on the part of the players that they are better prepared in every way to both individually and collectively dominate opponents. Teams that once thrashed you will eventually be on the receiving end of a statistical beating. However, it is not the statistical result that matters! It is the degree of changing and growing individual and team domination of opponents, leading to the positive statistical result, that really counts!

If you're not riding the wave of change...you'll find yourself beneath it.
Winston Churchill

As a result of the ongoing focus on creative unity and harmony the “Team of Brilliance” becomes a reality. Players who have experienced elite creative team synergy are never the same again. They understand and look forward to having other cooperative illuminating team highs in
the future. While it is impossible to go back and re-live past creative situations these individuals better appreciate their potential to develop a positive creative dynamic in future enterprises. As a consequence, players who have enjoyed these creative forward thinking training methods are more open to seeking better and often original solutions, to challenges in other life arenas. Creativity is exciting. Playing without barriers to risk and without roadblocks to the highest levels of team synergy is energizing. It is incredible what can be achieved when the coach demands and insists upon adventure, risk and creativity as the goal of each and every practice and game.
Chapter Five

15 Great Reasons For Playing Soccer “Legends” Style

While at University studying for a degree in Physical Education one of my classes embarked upon an interesting study. It was a comparison of the benefits of the Britain’s major sports. The goal was to identify which sport was the most beneficial to all round development. For the purposes of this study the 15 major developmental and participatory components of sport were identified as follows:

- Speed & Power Fitness
- Strength/endurance fitness
- Aerobic fitness
- Coordination, Balance & Agility
- Skill
- Intelligence
- Character development
- Social skills
- Equality of opportunity – no physical elitism
- Constant action & involvement
- Number permutations for practice and play
- Simplicity
- Economy
- Safety

All the sports in the British school system were evaluated and each was ranked for the degree to which they involved the above components. The Physical education students conducting the study included many elite performers from a wide variety of different sports. After much passionate discussion, during which each individual fought hard to justify a high ranking for their favorite sport, all the sports were ranked by vote. When the scores for all the categories were combined soccer earned the highest positional ranking, making it arguably the most beneficial all round sport. The multi-faceted nature of soccer allows it to challenge and reward the player in many different ways. This goes a long way toward explaining why soccer is the most played and watched of all the world’s sports.

In the two decades since my days as a Physical Education student, I have coached a minimum of two and a maximum of eight youth soccer teams at one time. As a result of countless thousands of hours of study, practice and games it has become obvious that, even though soccer is the most beneficial of all sports, it can be coached the “Training Soccer Legends” way to make the
experience vastly more rewarding. I’d like to share with you how the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy utilizes and enhances the major developmental and participatory components of sport to maximize the potential of every player.

The following is a description of how the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy enhances the beneficial affect of the 15 major developmental and participatory components of sport.

**Speed & Power Fitness**
Soccer develops the primary anaerobic fitness system, i.e. the ATP, (Adenosine Tri Phosphate), system for short bursts of speed and power, (0-10 seconds duration). The “Training Soccer Legends” approach maximizes the usage of the primary anaerobic fitness system because the highly pressured 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 stages involve the greatest degree of short burst, high intensity, energy sapping actions such as tackling, accelerating and decelerating quickly, changes of direction, dynamic fakes etc. Additionally, the high intensity, competitive cauldron of Legends soccer does far more to stress and develop the body’s plyometric capabilities, (the rebound capability of connective tissue), than traditional coaching methods.

**Strength/Endurance Fitness**
Soccer also develops the secondary anaerobic fitness system, i.e. the lactic acid system. This is the system utilized during intermediate length power activities. This system sustains the player for intense periods of activity ranging from 10 seconds to 2 minutes. The “Training Soccer Legends” system incorporates a 2-5 minute round robin competition structure that demands a sub maximal, yet high intensity continuous effort. The stressful effort needed in 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 trains a tremendous degree of secondary anaerobic capacity by gradually forcing back the anaerobic threshold, i.e. the point at which the involuntary shutting down of muscle function begins.

**Aerobic Fitness**
The “Training Soccer Legends” approach also develops the aerobic system for athletic endurance. This system encompasses sub-maximal, non-overload type activity from 2 minutes upwards in duration. With between 45-60 minutes of this type of activity in each outdoor 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 session, Legends trained players enjoy greater stamina and endurance growth than players in other, more traditionally coached, programs.

“*Hard training easy combat, easy training hard combat.*”
*Martial Suvorov*

**Important Quick Note:** The “Training Soccer Legends” approach utilizes all three physical systems to a high degree in all practices. In this way it provides a well-rounded, yet intense, program of fitness development, while distracting players from the pain of physical stress with a myriad of other technical and tactical challenges. As a consequence Legends trained players enjoy greater specific physical system development without the usual de-motivation and effort avoidance that accompanies traditional fitness training without the ball.
Coordination, Balance and Agility
The various situational and positional challenges in soccer encompass eye to foot, eye to thigh, eye to chest, eye to head and hand/eye coordination, (for goalkeepers). There is no other sport with this total body range of technical components. In addition, the need for split second body position adjustments in contact situations, puts great pressure on the components of coordination balance and agility. None of soccer’s techniques challenge and develop these physical skills like deceptive dribbling and goal scoring. The incredibly complex moves and shooting techniques involved with the Legends approach are some of the most difficult neuromuscular actions in sport and have to be performed under intense defensive pressure. Achieving consistent successful performance of these fakes and moves under pressure, at the highest level of competition, demands amazing coordination, balance and agility. Therefore, the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy is the very best for maximizing each player’s potential in these three key physiological areas.

Skill
No sport uses as many of the body’s parts in direct contact with the ball as soccer. Soccer players use their feet, thighs, chest, head and hands, (for goalkeepers). Furthermore, these areas can be used in many different ways with an endless permutation of effects. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach maximizes the development of all-round physical ability by focusing on the two most difficult skills that carry over or “transfer” into 3 of the other 4 field skills of the game i.e. passing, receiving & tackling. By focusing on the two most difficult and decisive skills five key technical areas of the game can be developed in a fraction of the time. This “5 skills for the price of 2” benefit makes Legends trained players far more technically astute than their counterparts in other programs.

“Skill without imagination is craftsmanship and gives us many useful objects such as wickerwork picnic baskets. Imagination without skill gives us modern art.”
Tom Stoppard

“An apprentice carpenter may want only a hammer and saw, but a master craftsman employs many precision tools. Computer programming likewise requires sophisticated tools to cope with the complexity of real applications, and only practice with these tools will build skill in their use.”
Robert L. Kruse

Intelligence
The situational variables in soccer are more numerous and demand faster analysis than in any other sport:
- First, soccer is a totally fluid sport with very few pre-planned situations. Therefore, nearly all actions depend on split-second analysis of constantly changing circumstances.
- Second, there are 11 opponents and 10 teammates to be taken into account at all times.
- Third, players must react to stimuli from all angles because soccer is one of the few ground based and aerially contested three hundred and sixty degree games.
• Fourth, players are subjected to numerous visual, sensual and audio cues during play.
• Fifth, in every decision there are a myriad of environmental variables to be taken into account i.e. weather, surface, temperature etc.
• Sixth, the plethora of available skills creates a confusing array of technical options with which to solve the problem.

“Skill, intelligence and confidence are an unconquered army.”
George Herbert

The combination and interaction of these six factors creates a constantly changing equation where every player must analyze and decide from a greater number of available options in less time, than in any other sport. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach adds to these game challenges by creating the most difficult mental training circumstances possible and imposes ever more complicated conditions upon players as their abilities grow. In practice, Legends players learn to assess the situational variables, plus select and perform the chosen techniques much faster than they will ever have to in a game. As a direct consequence of challenging players to overcome more situational variables and make decisions in less time than other coaching methods, the “Training Soccer Legends” approach develops, nurtures and rewards greater levels of functional intelligence.

Character Development
One of soccer's major benefits to the player is the development of important character traits for life. Qualities of perseverance, individual responsibility, application, drive, leadership, controlled aggression, concentration, teamwork, self worth, creativity and confidence are all developed to a tremendous degree by soccer. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach demands and enhances these personality traits to a greater degree of refinement than any other approach. This is because the difficult circumstances necessary for the attainment of these characteristics occur more often as a result of the unique developmental challenges in the Legends methodology.

“The greater difficulty, the more glory in surmounting it. Skillful pilots gain their reputation from storms and tempests.”
Epicures

Some of the character maximizing circumstances, inherent within the Legends approach, are as follows:
• Risk
• Constant need for 100% mental and physical effort
• Great emphasis on the individual
• Complicated fast changing situations
• High level of physical contact
• Elevated emphasis on communication
• Numerous transitions from offense to defense
• Crucial need for support of teammate, (in 2 v 2)


- Greater opportunity for personal accomplishment
- Mandatory performance of creative skills

Social Skills
Soccer both helps develop and reward extrovert characteristics. It is beneficial for improving social skills in a serious, meaningful environment where individuals are interacting under both high pressure, (during game or training), and low pressure, (pre or post game), conditions. The “Training Soccer Legends” method creates an atmosphere of resourceful problem solving under far greater stress than found in traditionally coached programs. This is debatably the most important social skill, therefore will have the greatest positive impact on that individual’s capability of achieving success and leadership prominence in other life environments.

“Men make history, and not the other way around. In periods where there is no leadership, society stands still. Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.”

Harry S Truman

Equality of Opportunity
The all round physical requirements of soccer allow individuals of a great many shapes, sizes and genetic characteristics to develop excellence and become valuable team members at elite levels of competition. Because leg and foot coordination are the major factors in attaining soccer proficiency even the smaller player can participate on an equal basis with bigger and stronger individuals. You do not have to be 280 lbs. or 6’8” tall to achieve professional soccer status. The “Training Soccer Legends” style enhances the integral fairness of the sport with equal and fair treatment of each player. This is because all participants are expected to learn and perfect the most difficult, innovative skills of the game. It combines equality of opportunity with the pursuit of creative excellence in ways alien to conventional coaching schemes. As a consequence, a greater cross section of players can experience positive reinforcement and success. In traditional coaching, where players aren’t as skillful, the influence of pure genetic physical prowess plays a much larger role.

Constant Action and Involvement
By nature, soccer is a game of constant action with very few breaks in play. This keeps both the player and spectator entertained, captive and absorbed for long periods of time. The “Training Soccer Legends” system teaches all players to master crucial creative and vital destructive aspects of the game, in the clutch, to the greatest possible degree. This method demands more repetition of complicated and creative “big play” offensive and defensive actions than any other coaching system in the history of the sport. It, therefore, keeps players engaged and learning plus entertains spectators to a far greater extent.
Any Number Can Play
Because soccer uses a round bouncy ball, even one person can enjoy such activities as juggling or dribbling in a very limited space, e.g. garage or basement, without a partner. Other skills such as shooting, passing or heading can be practiced using walls. When partners are involved the permutations for practice and fun with a soccer ball become endless. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is the most effective at accommodating any number of participants while involving them in very specific and creative techniques for excelling at the highest levels of the game. In other conventional “pass and receive” philosophies the coach needs a specific minimum or maximum number of players at practice if he is to pursue a viable team agenda. With the Legends approach any number of players can be optimally developed.

Easy to Understand
The objectives and rules of soccer are simple. The object is to score in the opponent's goal and stop them scoring in yours, with a ball that can be propelled in any direction, at any time. This is a concept even the very young can understand, thereby making participation in organized soccer training programs possible at an earlier age than in most other team sports. The “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy is very easy for kids to understand, yet optimally challenging at all stages of development. After the technical training stage each practice involves transitioning between two closely spaced goals. Unlike conventional coaching philosophies incorporating passing games in grids, servers outside the grid, sections of the field where some players can’t go etc; the Legends approach allows each player to go anywhere on the practice field, while challenging him to use the most creative offensive or effective defensive techniques and tactics under pressure. The concept is so very simple that the average 4 year old understands it. However, the challenge provided by the environment and Legends curriculum conditions is so difficult that even the accomplished 17 year old still has to apply himself 100% in order to be consistently successful.

Economical
When compared to the cost of other sports the cost of involvement in a soccer program is usually very reasonable. Essential personal equipment is limited to soccer shoes, shin-guards, socks, shorts and shirt. This makes soccer possibly the lowest cost team sport of all. In the Legends approach we focus to a far greater degree on practice than games. During the year we schedule 50-100% more practices than other premier programs. We believe that the thousands of extra touches that our players will inevitably receive in these additional practices will make them far more skillful players than those trained by other methods. Extra practices, over and above other traditional programs, are offered at no extra cost to the players and families. This is possible in part because of the higher ratio of players to each coach that is necessary to create a really challenging dribbling and shooting environment. As a consequence of the unique Legends method, players develop far better abilities and enjoy more practice opportunities, with no greater financial outlay, than that involved with other less effective premier soccer training programs.
Safety
Soccer involves mild physical contact. Excessive contact is penalized within the rules, therefore, contact injuries are minimized and tend to be less severe than other team sports like football or flight oriented sports like gymnastics. The low incidence of injury provides the ideal forum for long-term participation and allows the more mature or less fit individual to participate for a greater length of time. Logic dictates that the acquisition of greater skill, agility, flexibility and opponent awareness inherent in learning to be a great deceptive dribbler, guarantees Legends trained players the ability to recognize and avoid injury to a greater degree than players trained in a conventional “pass and receive” methodology. Players who are quick on their feet and exceptionally perceptive can leap over or change direction away from dangerous situations a fraction of a second earlier than those without these capabilities. Furthermore, players who have spent a significant part of their youth career in the crowded Legends practice environment can see and avoid the approaching danger to a far greater degree than those trained conventionally.

Important Quick Note: From a physical fitness standpoint the “Training Soccer Legends” approach has it all. Legends trained players develop great speed/power, strength/endurance and aerobic capability. The creative dribbling and shooting based curriculum also builds tremendous coordination, balance and agility. Additionally the deceptive dribbling and precision ball striking demanded of each player grooves great skill at speed. Intelligence is both fully utilized and developed by the ever changing myriad of variables, while character is honed because of the constant extra challenges, frustrations, fatigue and physical abuses that players have to overcome on and around the ball. The Legends way also demands great communication and creative problem solving at speed under pressure. These are two of the most essential life skills. Furthermore, the Legends approach offers the smaller, slightly built, and the bigger, more muscular individual, an equality of opportunity that more traditional coaching philosophies do not. Because of the constant action and involvement Legends players are engaged and motivated all practice long, plus 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 can be adapted to accommodate any player permutation at practice. A further advantage is that the “Training Soccer Legends” concept is comparatively simple and great players can be developed without unreasonable costs because the program is oriented more towards practice and development than the game. Last but not least, the curriculum builds a higher level of awareness and physical agility, plus a superior quality of connective tissue that makes Legends trained players less likely to suffer serious injury.

Soccer coached the traditional way is the world’s most popular team sport. Coached, played and watched the “Training Soccer Legends” way it can only be more rewarding, enjoyable and beneficial for teachers, players and spectators alike.

“Quality is never an accident; it is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction and skillful execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives.”

William A. Foster
Chapter Six
The Legend’s Greatest Benefit
Character Development

The Law of Life
The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
That stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king,
But lived and died a scruffy thing.
The man who never had to toil
And never had to win his share
Of sun and sky, light and air,
Never became a manly man,
But lived and died as he began.
Good timber does not grow in ease.
The stronger the wind, the tougher the trees,
The farther the sky, the greater the length,
The more the storm, the more the strength,
By sun and cold, by rain and snows,
In tree or man, good timber grows.
Where thickest lies the forest growth
We find the patriarchs of both.
And they hold counsel with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars.
This is the common law of life.
Douglas Mallock

The only thing that endures is character. While the end of an athletic career may be years away, the time to build character is right now. Just as the Redwood tree that stands the test of time must have a strong foundation, so must you. If you don't start out with that foundation of character you will have a hard time reaching your goals. If you are able to reach them without character, the satisfaction you feel will be fleeting. A century ago 50% of all Americans grew up on family farms. Hard work in a close family environment was the norm. Today only 2% of Americans live on family farms. With automation the constant, physical, grinding challenge of family farming has all but disappeared. Society has changed. Today’s youngster is barraged with information from TV, radio, video games, CD players, I-pods, CD-ROM, DVD and the Internet. The end result is a significant decrease in activity and a loss of the physical and character benefits associated with sticking to a hard, enduring, movement challenge. With the changes of the passing years it has become apparent that competitive soccer has assumed a role as one of the
most complete forms of character education available in modern society. Where else in this luxurious and physically lazy society does a person have to overcome simultaneous extremes of fatigue, frustration and physical abuse on a daily basis?

“A smooth sea never made a skillful mariner, neither do uninterrupted prosperity and success qualify for usefulness and happiness. The storms of adversity, like those of the ocean, rouse the faculties, and excite the invention, prudence, skill and fortitude of the voyager. The martyrs of ancient times, in bracing their minds to outward calamities, acquired a loftiness of purpose and a moral heroism worth a lifetime of softness and security.”

Author Unknown

During a tournament weekend today’s premier youth player is expected to participate in a minimum of three and a maximum of six games. The later games in a tournament get progressively harder and as the tournament progresses each player becomes extremely physically and mentally fatigued. Consequently, the incidence of error and frustration grows as the tournament progresses. As fatigue steps in challenges become more intimidating and players need greater self-control, intensity and focus in order to perform successfully. Soccer players also face a wide variety of weekly environmental, psychological, technical, tactical and physical challenges. Under these pressures they have to constantly observe, analyze and compute a myriad of game and practice variables before selecting the most appropriate solution. The challenge of thinking quickly through multiple options while suffering, tempers the metal of the spirit. This and many other pre-requisites for sporting success, i.e. leadership, teamwork, perseverance and courage, make soccer one of the truest forms of character education. The “Training Soccer Legends” coaching philosophy utilizes all the challenges of premier soccer to the greatest degree in the quest to develop tremendous character.

“The measure of a man’s real character is what he’d do if he knew he’d never be found out.”

Thomas McCauley - English Writer/Statesman

**How “Training Soccer Legends” Develops Positive Leaders**

A weakness of most coaches is that they pay scant attention to the leadership component of developing very young and adolescent players. Over time coaches usually develop reasonably astute tactical ability. They are “little commanders” moving men and weapons into different positions to create match-ups of superiority or hide areas of weakness. They have attended tactically focused coaching courses and read numerous books and magazine articles on strategic teaching and methods. These courses have convinced them that the best way to get success is to use what technical skills and leadership ability their players already have to steal the win against the next opponent. They have wrongly convinced themselves that finding the best way to arrange and use the troops to win is the main purpose of good coaching.

However, in reality it is a coach’s ability to develop leaders that will make the biggest difference to the ultimate altitude of our players in soccer and in life. Pigeonholing players by position
mostly uses what soccer and life skills they have already acquired and is a very questionable and perhaps even reprehensible method of teaching. In truth, the coaching component that separates the good from incredible, well done from masterful, and simply OK from fantastic, is first maximizing the self-concept and then the leadership abilities of ones players. Only by constantly fighting the emotional battle to extract the extra 10% effort out of your players will this self-concept and leadership component be maximized. You must use every tool at your disposal in unique and varied ways to challenge your players to develop maximum creativity, skill, tactical speed, fitness, self-belief & mental toughness. You must create an attitude of training intensity and sense of purpose that promotes total immersion in elevating personal performance. The unique drive and focus you bring to each practice and game will enhance the abilities and self-concept of the players, thereby developing their leadership capability to its fullest possible potential. This is the X factor that most coaches never really focus on. It is the one component that differentiates the truly awesome coach from the rest and separates the team leader from the pack.

In order to promote maximum effort my players are asked to rate their effort on a scale of 1-10 after each practice round of 1 v 1 or 2 v 2. It is made quite clear that only a 10 out 10 is acceptable. At the end of the practice all point scores are read to the players but I make it quite clear that the most important score recorded is that for effort. Nothing less than one’s best effort is acceptable! This has to be drummed into a player’s sub-conscious until every action is performed with the maximum physical and mental intensity that each individual is capable of generating at that moment in time.

**To Develop Great Leaders the Coach Must First Understand How Leaders Are Developed**

No one becomes an effective leader without a great self-concept. To lead effectively you must believe you are right and be able to do the job. To have the confidence that you know best you have to feel good about your ability to get the job done in an extraordinary manner. This demands a level of confidence that can only come from a high degree of self worth.

Therefore, in order to develop a team full of great leaders, the development of a high self-concept becomes the number one focus of the truly selfless and life-focused mentor/coach. The good news is that the best way to develop tremendous feelings of personal worth and a high self-concept through soccer, are exactly those that enhance a player’s chances of achieving their long-term potential in life.

In order to develop a high self-concept a complete life has to travel through five major phases:
- Dependence
- Independence
- Interdependence
- Ego based leadership
- Mentorship
A full and rich soccer career is a microcosm of life on a much faster track. As such it travels through all the above stages at a quicker pace. In life there are many opportunities for short-term gratification at the cost of significantly greater long-term reward. Perhaps the best example of this is leaving school at 16 to get a job. When you’re 16 with no bills and living at home, earning minimum wage at a fast food restaurant looks pretty good. When you’re 35 with two kids and a hefty mortgage, minimum wage no longer looks so good. At this point you hate your job and you wish you’d stayed in school and studied hard enough to pursue a career that was both intrinsically and financially more rewarding.

For both coaches and players alike soccer bears close resemblance to the above scenario. The difference is that most coaches will coach a player for no more than one, two or maybe a few years, therefore they have many selfish reasons and justifications for pursuing short-term gratification instead of long-term benefit. As a consequence it is a rare coach who pursues a totally unselfish curriculum that’s designed to develop tremendous independence before interdependence. However, this pursuit of great independence is the most vital and necessary component for encouraging each player to develop and exhibit team leadership. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach guarantees an exponentially greater level of independence than conventional “pass and receive” coaching methods. It also promises a far greater incidence of creative individual leadership because players who are challenged to make big plays grow into players who can get the job done. Legends players are expected to make big plays throughout their youth career. They make big plays so regularly that they acquire habitual leadership capabilities and are often dubbed “natural leaders”. However, just as the “overnight success” has typically spent many years practicing, failing and trying again, the “natural leader” has spent many years attempting to lead, making mistakes and persevering, through the trials and tribulations, to the reward of public respect and admiration.

“Freedom is not worth having if it does not connote freedom to err. It passes my comprehension how human beings, be they ever so experienced and able, can delight in depriving other human beings of that precious right.”
Mahatma Ghandi

The game of soccer is a team game and, no matter what, will always demand team responses and interaction. It is the individual quality of creative excellence and leadership that has been suppressed by the misguided coach who wants his players to play in a safe, cookie cut manner that fits his image, usually win oriented, of the way the game should be played. The conventional coaching environment suppresses the leadership ability of all the players within this atmosphere because their teammates expect them to pass the ball quickly, thereby discouraging any self-sufficiency, creativity and improvisational play. This is “anti-leadership” training because the expectations of both the existing leader, (the coach), and the players, (the peer group), are the opposite of the individual risk focus necessary to develop independent excellence prior to acquiring the level of team respect essential for leadership. The benefits of developing tremendous individual skill on the journey to mentorship and a complete life, are illustrated and reinforced by the following sent to me by a competitive cyclist with a child in the Legends club:
“I very much enjoyed the sequencing of life you laid out, (Dependence, Independence, Interdependence, Ego Based Leadership, Mentorship), and I have observed those very forces in play in my own life. It appears to me that on a personal level, they seem to follow decades of life, with the 20’s being those for independence, the 30’s where interdependence makes an impression, (particularly for those choosing parenthood), the 40’s for leadership, etc. Being involved in team sports, however, makes the track for going through this sequence much faster, and those who can develop the individual skills necessary to compete at a level where team interdependence can be experienced, are the lucky ones. Because team sports are generally very physically demanding, those who participate are usually young and it's intriguing to think that this gives them the opportunity to work through this sequence in a much more rapid succession than they will be able to in their overall life, (as I don’t know too many completely independent 18-year-olds). I am thinking that it’s possible that those who participate in team sports, and experience the rewards of leadership and mentorship at a young age, may perhaps be able to accelerate that progression in their own lives and sooner reach those levels of personal reward that I am just starting to feel in my 40s. Although my early years in athletics were in team sports, I didn’t have the individual skills necessary to make the team cuts when I went to high school. At that point I switched over to more independent sports, (tennis in HS, track and cross country in college), where individual achievement was the focus and the connection to the team was tertiary. After college I started racing bicycles competitively and over the years, as more women started competing, I saw the sport I loved move from one where my individual skill was enough to win, to one where liaisons with other teams and helping develop my teammates was critical to my success. I can’t tell you how much more enjoyable my sport became when I was able to move from independence to interdependence and on up. I tell you this because your comments have caused me to reflect on my own personal sports history where I realize that it was my lack of individual skills that prevented me from progressing initially, but eventually developing that individual success enabled me to experience the absolute thrill of victory that came from winning or contributing to a win as part of a team. As Lance Armstrong so ably showed with his US Postal Service team in the Tour De France, you’ve got to have the individual skills to even be allowed to play and then the teamwork can really bring ultimate success. The feeling of success that one experiences through developing tremendous individual skills, (which are typically just done in individual sports), does create an exceptionally high level of self-esteem. The part I had not thought of is how much more esteem can rise when children have the chance to apply it to a team endeavor and experience higher levels of interdependence, leadership, and mentorship.”

Kathy Burke-Thomas

**Important Quick Note:** The greatest soccer players have always been the ones who, at an early age, refused to pass the ball as much as expected by either their coaches or teammates. Yet it was this very quality that made them able to make the big plays without having to depend on teammates and eventually leapfrog more experienced players to the highest level of play. To be the greatest player you can be you must be prepared to lead. To be prepared to lead you must risk and fail bravely and yet remain encouraged to pursue more and greater risks in the quest for enhanced personal capabilities. Your peers will eventually recognize and acknowledge your creative talent and self-belief. Leadership will be the natural by-product of your elite ability, the confidence you exude and the respect you receive. It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy!
Chapter Seven

Legend’s Psyche - Developing A Great Soccer Mind

In life some of the hardest things to teach and learn are honesty, hard work, creativity, leadership and the entrepreneurial spirit. In soccer amongst the hardest things to develop are class, work ethic, skill, self-belief and the “Big Play” mentality.

Great soccer coaches need to understand the development of the last three characteristics and the role of the mind in that process. Whether you are big or small you, and all other normal adults, have about 50 ounces of incredible body tissue. Guarded by the bones of the skull is the most delicate, intricate and complicated computer known to man. It’s your brain and it’s 100% yours. If nurtured effectively it will bring you joy, achievement and fulfillment in abundance. Your mind is the most incredible information processor and action generator on the planet. It is fundamentally the same as the minds of Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill, Mahatma Gandhi and Bill Gates, all of who have changed the world for the better in so many ways. The wealth of spirit that can be earned from the development and exploration of your own mind is unlimited. It can absorb any aspect of the world’s historical data and expand upon that theme to open up horizons and vistas yet unknown.

This should give you a better understanding of the potential of the human brain. However, most people use a mere fraction of their mind’s capacity. We too often dwell on the unimportant and insignificant instead of using our minds to expand and grow. The commercial world uses computer programmers to set up their computer networks and ready them for action. However, the output from the computer is entirely dependent upon the input from the programmer. In the academic world the university uses lecturers to get the student ready for the advanced challenges of everyday life. In the world of sports the organization uses the coach to ready the players for the challenges of fierce competition. In both environments the student or player will usually reflect the quality of the input from the lecturer or coach.

The mind has an infinite capacity. Therefore the “programmer” has a vital role and fundamental responsibility to maximize the creative capacities of the pupil. This applies to all learning environments and it is essential that parents and older children examine and understand the vital importance of what is being taught in all learning arenas including soccer. Your mind is “the computer” and you are being “programmed” by a coach. If you are programmed with positive information the results will be positive and worthwhile. If you are fed negative information, the results will be negative and you will be destined to fail. Wise men and philosophers through the ages have disagreed about many things but they are unanimously in agreement on one point, we become what we think about!

That is why you must focus primarily on the creative offensive part of the game. If you focus on the development of tremendous individual skill you “input” the finest data into your computer
(mind). If you are focused on solving the more difficult problems of how to beat a player and score, you will easily develop the simpler team skills of creating space and passing to a teammate. If you are focused on developing the mental attributes necessary to develop fantastic individual skill and make big plays, you will develop a tremendous self-concept and phenomenal soccer confidence that will carry over into other arenas in life. More than anything you must develop the creative soccer mind. No matter what physiological limitations you may have, you can still develop the mind of a Pele. Creative thinking is not the sole domain of the fast player. The reverse is actually more often the case because slower players can’t rely on their athleticism to win the battle.

In school you will benefit to the maximum degree from striving for individual brilliance. Soccer is no different. You will benefit optimally from striving for mental and neuromuscular superiority. The only way to achieve this is to develop:

- The most incredible individual skills.
- The tactical speed to utilize those skills successfully under the greatest physical pressure.
- The self-concept and leadership mentality necessary to embrace and relish the challenge of learning to do this at the very highest level of competition.

You will notice that the last two of those characteristics are completely cerebral but both are totally dependent on the first, which is primarily repetitive and physical in nature.

That is why the first step in the Legends program is teaching the neuromuscular skill needed to perform the world’s twelve most effective fakes and moves, followed by the ability to shoot with accuracy and power.

The second component of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach, i.e. micro tactical speed, is developed maximally by constantly exposing the players to 1 v 1 situations in small congested areas in front of goal (“the clutch”). This is accompanied by expecting the players to perform their fakes and take-on opponents in all areas of the field, in all league and tournament matches.

The third stage i.e. macro tactical speed, is developed maximally by constantly exposing the players to 2 v 2 practice situations in small congested areas in front of goal (“the clutch”), and expecting them to use quick passing combinations, combination fakes and dribbling skills in all areas of the field, in all league and tournament matches.

A high self-concept and great leadership skills are mind based qualities that occur as a result of all three stages because players who have great skill and the ability to make big plays in the most congested of conditions cannot help but grow into team leaders. This becomes especially evident when our players play in programs unrelated to the Legends i.e. guest playing for other teams, State Select, High School or College. In these situations our players, (because they are trained to perform the most difficult creative skills at speed), stand out, head and shoulders above the rest and assume leadership roles that others are incapable of performing.
Chapter Eight

Creating the Legendary Tryout Player

Coaching styles and opinions are possibly more diverse in soccer than any other sport. This is due to the extremely open nature of soccer, which challenges both coaches and players alike with more variables than any other team game.

Many diverse viewpoints have been reflected in books about such well-worn subjects as technique development, appropriate drills, tactical teaching and rules. However, a lack of in depth analysis has resulted in a dearth of truly well formulated long-term youth teaching plans that are designed to maximize the skill acquisition, fitness development, tactical efficiency and psychological strength of each individual within a team framework.

How many of you have played one of your players purely as a destructive man-to-man marker at the under 12 age level because this would help you win the next game? Have you done this consistently in order to finish the season with a “winning” record, even when it isn't in the best interest of that individual’s development? Have you ever positioned the big kid with the powerful foot at central defense with the specific instruction that if the ball nears your goal he should kick it as far away as possible? Have you left most of the kids on the team in the same position for an extended period of time? And do you consistently play certain stronger players on your squad more than others if you think your weaker players will lose you the game? If any of these things apply to you I would encourage you to evaluate the individual developmental negatives that result as a direct consequence of such actions.

“The past is our definition. We may strive, with good reason, to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it, but we will escape it only by adding something better to it.”

Wendell Berry

The purpose of this book is partly to persuade the traditionalists out of their blinkered, semi illiterate approach to soccer coaching and show the dinosaurs of youth soccer coaching that the approach contained within these pages is the best way to truly serve the interests of each young player looking to them for guidance.

“Vision is the gift of seeing clearly what may be. Vision expands our horizons. The more we see, the more we can achieve; the grander our vision, the more glorious our accomplishment. The courage to follow our dreams is the first step toward destiny.”

Author unknown
As the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy evolved, the importance of training players who are capable of being selected to the highest level of play became more and more evident. Any coaching system should be judged solely by its ability to develop players with the necessary attributes for competing at the upper echelon of play, whether that level be high school varsity, state, regional or national ODP, college or professional. After 15 years of refining the “Training Soccer Legends” approach I can state categorically that there is no better system for earning a spot at the higher representative level than this one.

In 1998 I took one of my Legends teams to a top college showcase. A number of the players on this team had been with the “Training Soccer Legends” program from ages 5, 6 & 7. In this event I chose to adopt a different coaching approach. After my normal team talk about demonstrating tremendous individual skill on the ball until the right time to pass, I sat down and studied approximately 150 college coaches who were evaluating my players from the opposite touchline. In our first match-up of the three game showcase we played a State Champion team from Detroit, Michigan, one of the strongest mid-western soccer cities. We lost the toss and were given the kick-off. Jesse Baker, (Drake University, NCAA All American Player of the Week 2003, MO Valley Conference Player of the Year 2005), took the ball from the short kick off, committed the on-rushing opponent, faked a pass out to Bryan Williams, (Junior College All-American 2003), and performed a beautiful “Maradona Turn” around his helpless opponent before committing the midfielder and then playing the pass to Bryan. Meanwhile Bryan had slipped behind the opposition’s outside mid-fielder to the open space between him and the full-back. Bryan continued the skillful sequence with a “Double Scissors” to beat the full back before creating an opportunity to score with a cross that slid across the front of their goal. We did not score but almost all of the 150 college coaches overtly acknowledged the brilliance of the play by looking down at their clipboards and making notes. This is pure conjecture but I’m 100% confident that they listed Jesse and Bryan as players worth watching closely for the rest of the game and/or tournament. This pattern of events was reproduced many times during the tournament as Legend trained players produced deceptive moves in every area of the field to beat opponents or create space prior to making the pass. The contrast between the effect of the “Legends” trained players and the other team’s players on the college coaches was remarkable to behold. The other team played a classic passing game with excellent one and two touch play plus intelligent, explosive running off the ball to create space. However, during these passing sequences there was almost no overt recognition of the players involved in a particular passing play by the college coaches. In marked contrast, every time a Legends trained player performed a fake prior to releasing a penetrating pass, numerous college coaches acknowledged the demonstration of elite individual skill prior to the pass, by collectively lowering their heads and taking notes. I can only assume that the overt ability of the Legends trained players to deceive with a fake, made them stand out from the crowd. From the reaction of the college coaches it appeared that the more deceptive players were the ones that made a greater impression, whereas, the tendency of the other team’s players to quickly pass the ball, (and the responsibility), left the college coaches unable to assess whether or not they were really good players. This observation was reinforced by the many phone calls I received immediately following this, (and many other), showcase events. For many days following collegiate showcase events my phone rings consistently with inquiries about, and requests for information on, my players. Of note, is that
Most coaches who call me are interested in three or more Legends players, whereas my past experience as a College coach is of finding it difficult to identify more than one blue-chip player from any team I watched at showcase events. Furthermore, there is normally a mass turnover of college coaches at half time of showcase games because each coach has limited time, and many different games and players to watch, over the course of the weekend. However, in this game only a few coaches left at half for other games and many more arrived than departed. Once again I can only assume logically that the college coaches present during the first half of play felt that, rather than moving over to watch two different teams, their time would be better spent watching the Legends players they had made notes on to see if they really were top college material.

The extra time that a college coach spends watching the ball wizard combined with the extra time that the ball wizard has on the ball due to their elite skill is crucial to maximizing the opportunity of being selected for a higher-level team. When analyzed statistically it can be seen that the average player gets very little time on the ball with which to impress the college coach or professional scout. Most college coaches attend only half of each game because they need to watch as many players as possible over the course of the event. In that half of play, (45 minutes), each team may be playing with an average roster of 16 players. Therefore, there are 32 players competing for one ball during 45 minutes. Statistical evaluation has shown that most ball possessions are momentary in nature. In fact “live” time on the ball in the English Premier League is less than 25% of the total time of the game. Stoppages in play, travel time of the ball between players and the conventional playing methods of one and two touch passing, reduce each player’s time on the ball. Consequently each player actually spends a mere fraction of total game duration in possession of the ball. However, certain players on each team enjoy more possession. Each team’s central midfielder usually enjoys more ball possession because of the greater incidence of action in the middle of the field. Conversely satellite players, i.e. full backs and wingers, get less time in possession and less opportunity to impress.

If we take time in actual possession on a conventional team as one fourth of 45 minutes, (that’s high side positive), the total time on the ball for both teams in one half of play will be a maximum of 12 minutes. When 32 players are divided into 12 minutes each player will get less than 24 seconds with which to impress a college coach or professional scout. If all they do in their precious 24 seconds is treat the ball like a “hot potato” and pass, the evaluator will only see a limited amount of their capabilities. If however, the player is capable of mixing one and two touch passing with well chosen fakes & dribbling based possession, followed by a successful forward pass or shot, the evaluator will get a more attractive picture of that player as a “big play” maker and be significantly more likely to recruit her. Furthermore, great dribblers and goal scorers will enjoy more time on the ball than their less creative counterparts, (see the “skill compounding” section for greater detail). Much of this extra time on the ball is endorsed and provided by teammates who pass to the creative dribbler more often because they recognize that her superior skill makes her more effective. Because she is more able to create opportunities to penetrate or score than the conventional passer, the deceptive dribbler will also hold the ball for longer periods of time. This extra time on the ball will give a talented dribbler a much greater share of total exposure than the 22 seconds on the ball that an average player gets. Therefore, as a consequence of receiving the ball more often, the ability to hold the ball longer and greater skill
at making penetrating plays, players developed in the “Training Soccer Legends” system enjoy vastly better opportunities to impress evaluators and secure an invitation to play at a higher level.

An added benefit of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach comes from the inability of the opposing coach to single out one or two key Legends players and man mark those players to the detriment of the team. In the showcase game against the Michigan state champions the opposing coach initially assigned his best man marker to Jesse Baker, however after 15 minutes of great individual skill from numerous Legends players, the assigned man marker turned to the coach in obvious confusion and asked, “which one do I mark”? His coach shrugged his shoulders in the traditional gesture of confusion and indecision because there was no obvious answer. It takes opposing coaches many games to assess Legends trained players’ strengths and weaknesses. This is because all Legends players are trained to be great dribblers and goal scorers, therefore when compared to most teams where good dribblers and finishers are a rare commodity, the creative difference between the best and worst Legends player is very small. Because all Legends players are trained to be extremely creative identifying one impact player on a Legends team is an almost impossible task.

A further benefit of the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy is that the team is less susceptible to the negative effect of injuries on statistical success. A more traditionally trained squad has trouble when key players get injured. However, teams trained with the Legends method don’t have the same degree of problems because skillful players can be switched from position to position without major disruption. In the 1998 USYSA Mid-West Regional Championship game the 81/82 Legends faced Javanon S.C. from Kentucky without three injured players. One of our top goal scorers, a Regional team mid-fielder and also our team captain had all suffered long-term injuries, leaving us with just 14 healthy players to face the best the Mid-West had to offer. In the final we scored three great goals in open play to overcome two penalty kicks and won the game 3-2 on a sudden-death overtime “golden goal”. The goal was scored by Joe Burns, (Top goal-scorer at St Joseph’s & Rockhurst Universities 2000-2004), who had mostly played as a defender during the preceding year. For the golden goal Joe dribbled from his own half of the field and beat 5 Javanon players before finishing a left-foot bullet. That year Joe also scored the winning goals in the Missouri State Cup semi-final and final to lead Rockhurst High School, (who had 9 Legends trained players on their team), to the Missouri State High School Championship for the second straight year. Meanwhile, on the Kansas side of the State line, Drew Perkins, (Drafted pro by the Kansas City Comets), and Geoff Miles, (NCAA Div’ One All Conference & top 25 nationally in assists 2003), led Shawnee Mission Northwest in goals and assists to the Kansas State High School title. For the past 10 years State Championship high school successes have been achieved time and again by a variety of schools with Legends trained players in key midfield and striking roles.
So why is it that Legends trained players are able to make such a positive difference? It goes by a number of different names:

- Self-concept
- Confidence
- Self-assurance
- Poise

These are all different names for a character attribute that every good parent would like their child to develop.

The highest hurdle separating you from something you desire is the lack of confidence that you can possess it. When you really have faith that it is possible, once you can visualize yourself achieving it, living it or possessing it, everything else is superfluous. With belief, plus the persistence to complete the job and do whatever is necessary, anything can be yours. What is it that you truly want to do? You can do it. Realize that you are as capable as any person. See yourself doing it. Touch it. Hear it. Taste it. Smell it. Run with it. Believe in it and believe that it is yours. Everything you need to get there is available to you, when you believe and when you commit to getting there. When you know that you can do it. Nothing can hold you back once you have belief and commitment. You will find a way. The Legends approach to developing fantastic individual skill works miracles in helping children attain a better vision of themselves and their future potential. As a result of the extraordinary personal skills they attain, our players want the ball, feel capable of making a positive difference and learn to make big plays. As the old saying goes, “It is hard to be humble when you are brilliant!”

Let us imagine for a moment that you are a child beginning the “Training Soccer Legends SuperSkills” program.

For you to develop a strong sense of personal accomplishment you need to acquire skills that are extraordinary. You will need to feel that your skills are better than those of players trained differently and clearly recognize your superiority. This is the primary goal of our program.

“One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.”

*Elbert Hubbard*

To go to the next level you will need to learn how to be successful in the 1 v 1 situation. You will learn to perform all the moves against aggressive defenders with great effectiveness. You will need to learn how to shoot and score goals under extreme defensive pressure. You will need to learn how to master and dominate the ball when surrounded by opponents in tight corners.

To get a College Scholarship you will have to learn to apply and exhibit those skills when faced with multiple tactical choices. You will need to take intelligent risks and assume leadership responsibility in intense, intimidating psychological circumstances. You will need to stamp your authority on each practice, league, tournament and eventually “College Showcase” game. You will need the skills of a Pele, the courage of a Lion and the smarts of an Einstein.
Believe it or not the Legends approach is the only soccer philosophy that can maximize your potential of acquiring these rare personal attributes.

Important Quick Note: If you are going to make it to a higher level of play you have to stand out at the current one. In order to stand out you must have the ability to make big creative plays. There are many types of “big plays”, however the ones prized highest by most coaches are those that create penetration for their team. Scoring a goal is the ultimate big play. Second to scoring comes the assist. The player who combines deceptive dribbling with penetrating passes to create her own opportunities to score and scoring opportunities for others, is the ultimate “big play” maker. However, no one will ever scale the heights of deceptive dribbling and goal scoring without:

- Taking great risks to beat players
- Trying to thread the assist pass through the defense
- Attempting the difficult shot under intense defensive pressure

Tremendous risk and failure is the only possible foundation for this type of success, which is why great dribblers and goal scorers are so rare. Most players and coaches perceive statistical failure as a personal blow to their ego.

One of the most challenging parts of existence is that people project their own values onto others. Unfortunately many are motivated more by what’s in it for them and therefore attribute this value judgment to the majority. Do the right thing, with no regard to self-interest, in all matters, and life will reward you with riches of the spirit in abundance!

Andy Barney

To eventually realize the vastly greater rewards of individual creative brilliance, (in the case of the players), and the true lasting pleasure of constructive mentorship, (in the case of the coach), a positive welcoming of risk and failure is vital.

“It is because modern education is so seldom inspired by a great hope that it so seldom achieves great results. The wish to preserve the past, rather than the hope of creating the future, dominates the minds of those who control the teaching of the young.”

Bertrand Russell
Chapter Nine

Team or Individual Dribbling and Shooting Genius?

“Before moving into the area of Public Victory we should remember that effective interdependence can only be built on a foundation of true independence. Private Victory precedes Public Victory”. Dr Stephen Covey—The 7 Habits Of Highly Effective People

The most common argument used against the dribbling and finishing approach by passing and receiving oriented coaches is the “character and teamwork” justification. The claim here is that the passing and receiving approach develops and enhances two of the greatest societal values i.e. character and teamwork. If this claim is examined from the perspective of intent it may have some validity. However, if examined from the perspective of reality and hands on experience, it is seriously flawed. In his book “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” Dr Stephen Covey writes, “Before moving into the area of Public Victory we should remember that effective interdependence can only be built on a foundation of true independence. Private Victory precedes Public Victory. As we look back and survey the terrain to determine where we’ve been and where we are in relationship to where we’re going, we clearly see that we could not have gotten where we are without coming the way we came. There aren’t any other roads; there aren’t any shortcuts. There’s no way to parachute into this terrain. The landscape ahead is covered with the fragments of broken relationships of people who have tried. They’ve tried to jump into effective relationships without the maturity, the strength of character, to maintain them”.

“I am a part of all that I have met.”
Lord Tennyson

You have to travel the road. You can’t be successful with other people if you haven’t paid the price of success with yourself. Covey continues, “You can’t have the fruits without the roots. It’s the principle of sequencing: Private Victory precedes Public Victory. Self-mastery and self-discipline are the foundation of good relationships with others. Interdependence is a choice only independent people can make. Unless we are willing to achieve real independence, it’s foolish to try to develop human relations skills. We might try. We might even have some degree of success when the sun is shining. But when the difficult times come, and they will, we won’t have the foundation to keep things together.” When we assess the strongest teams in everyday life we soon begin to appreciate that the better-educated individual, with a more complete educational background, is most likely to be part of a successful team. One example is in the arena of marriage where rates of marital success rise with the longevity of the educational background and experience of the individuals involved. Another example is found in business where there is an unshakeable link between formal education and successful cooperative management. Whether we examine the legal, medical, scientific, academic or any number of other well respected
professions where people work together, we will discover dedicated individuals who during their
days in higher education pursued their studies in a totally self centered manner. This selfish
pursuit of knowledge is fully promoted, encouraged and endorsed by parents, teachers and the
educational system. An exceptionally well-prepared and educated individual will have a better
character and greater probability of working effectively, with other dedicated individuals in their
chosen field, to create a successful team, prosper economically and hopefully create a positive
legacy for mankind.

*Every animal leaves traces of what it was; man alone leaves traces of what he created.*
*Jacob Bronowski*

As parents and teachers we see clearly that self-centered focus on general and later specific
study, is beneficial to the successful pursuit of career goals. We can also see that knowledge
gained during these years of self-centered study helps individuals develop a stronger character
and allows them to become more capable of fulfilling essential team roles at an extremely
difficult and complex level of individual interaction and team performance. In this way the
greatest teams of pioneers have achieved the most creative and astonishing breakthroughs of the
modern era. Such astonishing achievements as putting a man on the moon, splitting the atom and
developing the microchip, were achieved as a result of assembling the most brilliant minds of the
day on cooperative teams. If all this makes sense then why is it that a “team” approach is deemed
to be the best way to develop soccer players from an early age? How many of the above
achievements would be a reality if each of the individuals on those teams had been asked to pass
the Math book to the kid at the next desk every 2 seconds? This is what our young soccer players
are asked to do in a passing and receiving coaching approach! How many great rocket scientists
would NASA have had in the “Man on the Moon” project if those same future scientists had not
been encouraged to first develop their self-centered creative mathematical and scientific skills?
We have so few great dribblers and finishers because our country’s coaches focus on teamwork
before the players have learned to dominate the ball. This can be compared to asking NASA
scientists to put a man on the moon prior to understanding basic math.

*“Originality is the essence of true scholarship. Creativity is the soul of the true scholar.”*
*Nnamdi Azikiwe*

Many “team” oriented soccer coaches do not understand that great teams are made up of great
individuals. Great individuals learn to be totally comfortable with the ball at their feet, under
pressure, in the clutch, inside the penalty area, where the game is won or lost in a blink of an eye.
To be truly successful in building an elite creative team coaches must delay their major forays
into the realm of team play until the individual has attained proficiency in the most difficult skill
areas of the game. Developing a fantastic team first involves the cultivation of tremendous
creative dribbling and finishing ability and the positive self-concept and confidence that comes
with the acquisition of superior abilities in those skills. Only then can the coach form a truly
great team where players are interchangeable and each individual desires the responsibility of
making the big plays. And only then will players have the technical skill and speed necessary
under extreme defensive pressure to succeed consistently at the very highest levels.
Chapter Ten

Legends Trained Players Take Responsibility

How much responsibility are your players willing to take? The more responsibility they assume, the more successful they’ll become. Some people look at a difficult situation and say, “That’s not my concern.” Others look at the same situation and say, “I’ll make it my concern. I’ll do something about it.” Guess who ends up being more successful? There are plenty of perfectly reasonable and legitimate reasons to avoid responsibility. So why would anyone choose to assume responsibility? Because choosing to take responsibility means choosing to achieve, choosing to succeed, choosing to make a truly positive difference. Many players get by fairly well without assuming much responsibility. But is that really what you want for your players…just to get by? The next time you see players running away from responsibility make them choose to run towards it. Insist they make the choice that will bring them success and achievement. Insist they demand the ball, use their fakes to take players on, go to goal and shoot. If they choose to take responsibility they'll be choosing to succeed. The familiar and proven offers a level of comfort that most people find hard to resist and fewer still want to disturb. Creativity is about uncovering and discovering the new, the heretical, the previously unsaid. Coaches in creative organizations have a sense of surprise and have a lifelong desire to promote the search for richness beyond their own experience and capabilities. This is the only way to build a truly great team or “team of brilliance”! Any coach or parent attempting to justify a primarily passing and receiving approach by claiming that their major focus is the development of team skills and character for life is severely limiting the potential of their players and guaranteeing less success in both areas. Coaches and parents who encourage their players to pass the ball and the responsibility to a teammate prior to learning the difficult creative dribbling skills needed to hold the ball until the time is right to make the pass or take the shot, will never teach the self-belief and consequent acceptance of responsibility needed to become a team player of the highest order. To ever become a team player like Pele, Michael Jordan or Wayne Gretsky, a child will first have to be selfish and focus almost entirely on dribbling and finishing at the younger ages, just as they did. Were they great team players during their late teens and beyond? You bet! They were the greatest ever to play their respective sports. Were they great team players before their middle to late teens? Certainly not! They were individualists. They were more focused on beating opponents and putting the ball or puck in the basket or net. Eventually the whole world saw the positive consequences of this early, self-centered, creative dribbling and finishing focus. Now it is up to us to accept the responsibility to teach and encourage our players to be the most talented and confident dribblers and finishers with the certain knowledge that they will eventually have a more complete character and the ability to be a productive team member at a much higher level than would otherwise be the case.

“Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen.”

Robert Bresson
Taking this train of thought one-step further leads to the realization that coaches who train the team game too early restrict the probability that their players will eventually become leaders and mentors in life. Individuals who are too intent on pleasing others will play it safe and pass the ball plus the responsibility, instead of attempting something exceptional but risky. These players put the needs of their teammates and too often the coach’s desire to win, above their own needs and their individual right to learn tremendous individual skills. Great leaders and mentors are usually those people who worked unusually hard on their independent capabilities prior to developing their interdependent capabilities. Just as we recognize a great dribbler and finisher as a team leader the same principles apply in life where we recognize a great politician, doctor or coach as a rightful leader of a political, medical or sports team. Credibility as a leader or mentor comes from a foundation of many years of independent study and the recognition by others of unique knowledge, talents and qualifications. The great politician has traditionally enjoyed significant success in other environments requiring a tremendous focus on independent skills. In a study of the pre-political careers of the last four Presidents, Ronald Reagan enjoyed an illustrious acting career that needed many years of independent study and hard work. George Herbert Walker Bush was initially a military leader and great business success in the oil industry. Bill Clinton was a tremendous student and earned a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford University. George W Bush was a fighter pilot and successful businessman in a number of arenas, including that of baseball ownership. In soccer an inordinate number of high level coaching jobs and positions of leadership are held by previously great players who have traditionally come from the lower socio-economic sectors of society and yet have developed a great self-concept and public respect as a result of their unique focus on those skills that allowed them to lead their teams as players. Pele, Platini, Hoddle, Cruyff, Beckenbauer, Ardiles, Carlos Alberto, Dalgleish, Keegan, Voeller, Van Basten, Klinsmann and many more, have earned the respect of their peers and the public at large because they had exceptional individual skills and the confidence to take risks and use those skills for the good of the team. The creation of these world-class skills necessitated phenomenal personal sacrifice and commitment but ultimately provided these soccer superstar players with the springboard to elite coaching and management opportunities.

“It is certain that the greatest poets, orators, statesmen, and historians, men of the most brilliant and imposing talents, have labored as hard, if not harder, than day laborers; and that the most obvious reason why they have been superior to other men is that they have taken more pains than other men.”
Orison Swett Marden

The development of the truly successful individual in life is dependent on a foundation of independence. The stronger the foundation the greater the likelihood of the self-concept and character to ignore the critics, do what’s right and make a positive impact on society.

“An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last.”
Winston Churchill

Just as the child who is always tied to mommy’s apron strings struggles to lead an independent life, so will the player who hasn’t developed creative dribbling skills. This player will be totally
reliant on teammates for support and have to play an organized pre-set team system for success because exceptional individual achievement is out of reach. The greatest players are never those who need the constant support of teammates. The true greats are those who can beat players and score on their own when support isn’t available. These are players who spend a greater time on the ball than their young friends and because they learn the best skills, accept and demand the responsibilities of leadership to a far greater degree than their less dedicated and accomplished teammates. History has shown us that it is those individuals who develop a great degree of creative independence who will eventually be respected enough to lead others credibly and effectively. Less independent and accomplished souls will not have the public respect or the personal knowledge and skill to assume command and eventually mentor others.

“Managers and coaches won’t allow their players to make a mistake in America. When the game is on the line, the football coach calls a time out before dictating some obvious play. The basketball coach pulls the team aside to tell them not to foul anyone, with the expected result. The baseball manager goes to the mound to tell the pitcher not to throw anything over the heart of the plate and not to walk the guy either. And the biggest reason of all that we Americans don’t like soccer is the way that these wasteful foreigners throw away time. In soccer, the clock runs continuously, even during out-of-bounds plays and arguments on the field. To us, time is money. It has to be conserved and allocated carefully because of its great value. So basketball and football coaches are constantly stopping the action, conserving time, planning strategy. Baseball managers stop play repeatedly in the late innings to execute their high-level strategies. Soccer thrives in societies that celebrate artists and creativity. Whereas American football, for example, resembles playing sheet music, soccer is more like jazz: each player, like a soloist, responds to what was created a moment before and improvises something stunning in his own moment. The deciding factor in a soccer game is usually a brilliant sequence of creative moves by a series of soloists that results in a goal. For a country founded on the principles of democracy and the rights of the individual, we want a surprisingly authoritarian system for our sports teams”.

James Breiner

Mentorship is the ultimate position of leadership. However, an effective mentor depends completely on earning the respect of the student. Great players are mentors in their own right. They make those around them better because the opposition doesn’t know what to expect. They beat players and create space for teammates and help everyone on their team to greater individual and collective levels of success. They set the standards for other players and gradually raise the bar for their teammates as they improve. Misguided youth coaches who coach the team at the expense of the individual do tremendous damage. They could develop tremendous self-concept in their players if they encouraged great individual creative skill and risk taking, instead of teaching their players to pass off the ball and responsibility quickly to someone else.

“All who have accomplished great things have had a great aim, have fixed their gaze on a goal which was high, one which sometimes seemed impossible”.

Orison Swett Marden
Chapter Eleven

Develop the Skillful Warrior Before the Team

I came from a very traditional team/integration approach to playing and coaching soccer, therefore it took many years of intense sports study to understand that individual pursuit of soccer excellence relies on taking ever greater risks and continually stepping outside of ones’ comfort zones. In one of the strange contradictions of life and sport this is a vital pre-requisite to developing incredible team unity and harmony. Nowadays Legends coaches spend years developing very independent risk takers who later become a harmonious part of a much more talented team, (team of brilliance), than when team unity and harmony was the initial focus.

‘Felicidad’ - happiness - is a word Ronaldinho uses often in conversation. He was born in 1980 in a working-class district in Porto Alegre, in the south of Brazil, the youngest of three children. His father, João de Assis Moreira worked in the shipyards. “I loved dribbling as a boy. The way we used to play, in the street, was no good for anything of course. If you're playing for five hours you don't want to score goals all the time and I loved dribbling. I could score a goal, but I preferred to dribble.”

Ronaldinho

Later on we concentrate more on team unity and harmony. In this team “combination play” phase much time is spent teaching our players to work in harmonious units and to improve their focus on how to penetrate in tandem with teammates, while continuing to use deception and improvisation to beat players in dribbling situations. This first individual and later team emphasis, is very much how traditional educational philosophy works. However, because there is no team emphasis to confuse the issue, it is much easier to support in an individual environment such as the classroom or swim team. First the “Training Soccer Legends” method centers on developing a technically, physiologically and psychologically strong, capable, independent individual. This is because our experience has shown us that, when we focus on team building before the child has developed independence with the ball, the long-term result is complete dependence on teammates. Players trained in this “pass and receive” manner fail to develop the ability to make the big plays that differentiate them from the masses that refuse to take the risk and responsibility to make great things happen. Life mirrors this because it is those who have either the genetic or learned confidence to step up and attempt the big play that will eventually become leaders.

“Be brave enough to live creatively. The creative is the place where no one else has ever been. You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your intuition. You can’t get there by bus, only by hard work, risking, and by not quite knowing what you’re doing. What you’ll discover will be wonderful: yourself.”

Alan Alda
Chapter Twelve

The Passer Needs Legends Training More

There are players who are more suited to a team mode of operation. However, in the Legends approach, we feel strongly that to play to that strength and allow them to stay within that comfort zone will cost them their opportunity to eventually become a truly great player and leader. Over the years I have coached many players who were comfortable working within a more team oriented framework. As a consequence of this experience my hypothesis is that the more naturally cooperative individual needs our approach to the greater degree. Our philosophy puts in what genetics and/or the environment doesn't. The willingness to take a risk, try to make the big play, and accept great responsibility do not come easy to most players. Both cooperative and “go it alone” personality types will benefit far more from the Legends approach than any other method. However, it is the less assertive, more cooperative and externally motivated individual who needs the Legends philosophy to a greater degree than the highly assertive, independent and internally motivated player.

“To succeed as a team is to hold all of the members accountable for their expertise.”

Michael Caplan

Whether intentionally or not most parents focus on making children conform and operate within generally accepted guidelines and comfort zones. Creative original thinking is often unintentionally restricted and discouraged by parents who have their own ingrained social paradigms. Due to its laws, rules and constraints, creative exploration and discovery is also frowned upon by society at large and yet curiously, all positive progress in the history of humankind has been made by those brave individuals who adventured beyond generally accepted paradigms and constraints.

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

George Bernard Shaw

In the “Training Soccer Legends” methodology we encourage players to step outside their reasonable comfort zones and make bigger and better plays until they feel really good about their ability to be an impact player. We believe that this leadership will carry over into other life arenas. This belief is based upon common sense rationale and years of experience. Additionally, we have received many testimonials from players and parents who have seen a risk/reward individual metamorphosis occur as a result of the creative growth acquired during the early years in the risk oriented Legends philosophy.

“The policy of being too cautious is the greatest risk of all”

Jawaharlal Nehru
Important Quick Note: The “Training Soccer Legends” program will develop tremendous creativity, self-concept, responsibility and leadership in ways that other more traditional methodologies can’t. In the process our players become elite, confident, well-rounded individuals assured enough to step up and lead responsibly when the situation calls for it. Most soccer programs fail to address this crucial aspect of character development.

Eventually, the Legends program challenges our highly independent and confident players to focus intensely on team cooperation and unity. As Dr Stephen Covey states in the 7 Habits of Highly Successful People, "Put first things first”. My belief is that most children receive constant and ample input from good schools and parents about how to be good neighbors. What they are rarely taught is how to be strong and confident individuals so that their relationships can be truly fulfilling interactions, between mutually respectful, capable, independent individuals. In other words, between people talented and confident enough to step up and lead when duty calls, but respectful and humble enough to assist others when the time is right. The development of this leadership and mentorship character is the primary objective of the Legends approach. For this reason the team portion of the curriculum comes only after great individual ability and psychological strength has been carved in stone.

“In early childhood you may lay the foundation of poverty or riches, industry or idleness, good or evil, by the habits to which you train your children. Teach them right habits then, and their future life is safe.”
Lydia Sigourney

“The loftier the building, the deeper must the foundation be laid.
Thomas Kempis
Chapter Thirteen

The Legends Method Avoids Positional Specialization

The disease of winning permeates our sports to the degree that most coaches will position players as young as 6 years of age and keep them in that pigeonhole during practice and games for a whole season or year. This is done to maximize the team’s chances of winning the next league or scheduled tournament. Unfortunately the end result is a player who sees the game from only one perspective and learns only the limited skills, tactics, fitness and psychology demanded of that position. In Paul Gardner’s excellent book “Soccer Talk” he quotes Columbia University coach Dieter Ficken, “The moment that you have a plan that the players must follow, you’re immediately playing non-soccer. In a game, players under pressure will play to their strengths. The moment you start giving them roles, then the players are not playing their game, but a game the coach perceives as soccer.” Kids love to play and create. They will spend hours setting up their toys and constructing imaginary scenarios. The natural tendency to be diverse, creative and adventurous is often stifled by the coach who sees the game from a rigid, organizational, win-oriented, perspective. The inexperienced young player wants to learn and grow. She needs to be encouraged to experiment. She desires the ball and wants to be taught to do amazing creative things with it. The last thing she wants to do is share it with a teammate. The normal child desires fun through the satisfaction of the need for active play. This involves great movement and lots of contact with the ball in a creative, free spirited manner. However, most coaches ask their players to play a position. They first try to give their team structure. Young kids don’t want or need positional structure in their games. It takes away from the things they see as most enjoyable, i.e. ball contact, movement and play. Therefore, it takes away part of their motivation and enjoyment. Control freaks need not apply for coaching jobs in the Legends club. No matter how much we believe we understand or know, creativity is mercurial, a puzzle that ultimately cannot be fathomed in its entirety. You have to allow a certain degree of suspension of control; perhaps even be prepared to promote constructive anarchy where the means, if ethical and moral, are always acceptable if they result in a constructive end.

“Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.”
Goethe

For players in the earlier stages of development the great coach will create a practice environment where the only emphasis is doing ones best, tremendous individual skill and enjoyment. In games there will be no pigeonholing in order to win. Each player will play an equal amount of time in offensive and defensive positions and be expected to attempt the most difficult creative dribbling and ball striking skills they are capable of, in all areas of the field. In this way motivation and creative skill acquisition will be maximized because creative accomplishment goes hand in hand with a positive self-concept and leads to even more individual enjoyment.
Chapter Fourteen

Legends Soccer is First An Individual Sport

Because a chain is only as strong as its weakest link the good soccer coach will need to approach soccer primarily from an individual perspective. Unfortunately this is rarely the case. To help in illustrating this it is useful to draw a comparison between soccer and weightlifting. In weightlifting there is very little emphasis on team success, therefore all coaching is designed to maximize individual skill by refining and grooving techniques with fractional adjustments, until the actions can be performed perfectly every time.

However, in soccer the complications involved with the team concept cause most coaches to pay only cursory attention to the development of tremendous creative technique before moving quickly into match related drills. This often happens before the players have a rudimentary knowledge of the correct basic skills of the game. The usual result is the inability of players to perform the simplest technical actions with speed and efficiency. In many instances older players will have a complete conceptual understanding of the coach's aims and objectives, yet due to poor early coaching and technical limitations, will be unable to combine effectively to achieve tactical success. The end result of this lack of individual technical teaching will be frustration and de-motivation on the part of both players and coach alike.

What Can the Good Coach do to Avoid This?
The good coach will recognize that during the early stages of development soccer should be taught in the same way as individual sports. In cognitive development kids progress from learning simple concepts involving few variables; e.g. stacking building blocks, to more difficult concepts requiring the assessment of more complicated and diverse alternatives, such as assembling models from toy construction kits. Consequently it is evident that in order to build a model village the youngster must first learn to stack building blocks!

Many coaches, however, will split their six year olds into two teams, introduce a ball, and after a short description of how important it is to pass to a teammate expect some degree of cognitive understanding and successful performance. Here the process of mutual frustration begins. Why is this?

- Firstly, the young child believes with typical youthful ignorance that the coach knows what he's doing and perceives himself as failing when he cannot comply successfully with the coach’s instructions.
- Secondly, the coach has seen accomplished players play, therefore when his players are light years away from bearing any resemblance to that image, he feels an acute sense of inadequacy as a teacher.

When analyzed intelligently it can be seen that introducing a team coaching approach to the game of soccer in the earliest stages of development is akin to introducing advanced algebra in kindergarten. In this approach both the coach and the individual are destined to fail.
Chapter Fifteen

What Makes a Great Soccer Player?

When answering this question a number of names spring to mind. From the fifties Matthews & Puskas, the sixties Pele & Best, the seventies Cruyff & Kempes, the eighties Platini, Maradona & Gullit, today Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Robinho & Zidane. All these truly spectacular players share a common characteristic, immense creative skill! To the spectators of each era games containing these superstars had an added dimension. Call it creativity, artistry, unpredictability, entertainment, flair, whatever name is chosen could never do justice to the diversity, versatility and sheer beauty these players could bring to the highest levels of both club and international soccer.

As Paul Gardner American soccer’s premier writer puts it, “The main course here has to be ball skill, and in its more refined form, ball artistry. It is this that gives soccer its aesthetic dimension. Without that artistry, truth be said, soccer can be a very dull game.”

What Unusual Qualities Did All These Players Possess?

Was it their ability to pass, tackle or control the ball that made them famous? Their competence in these skills was unquestionable, however these areas of their game were little better than many hundreds of other players. Was it their aerial skills or tackling that set them apart? Unlikely! How often have we seen great headed goals or defensive plays from Matthews, Puskas, Platini or Maradona?

Without doubt the two skills that set these players apart from the thousands of others who have played international soccer over the decades, are dribbling and finishing. Their dribbling defined the unique genius of these players by illustrating their tremendous ability to cut, spin and turn with incredible speed, dexterity and disguise, in tight areas, under pressure from one or more opponents. They had seemingly effortless ability to do all this without looking at the ball, (except for the occasional quick glance), while reading the movement of defenders and the runs of teammates. This ability allowed them to create, recognize and exploit penetrating opportunities at the very first instant. This rare quality elevated them from the respect shown to the professional player to the worldwide worship and adulation bestowed upon the soccer god.

Their finishing demonstrated the ability to assess the correct finishing option, whether power drive, chip, banana, side foot, volley or half volley. They consistently exhibited the ability to assess the position of defenders and goalkeeper and perform the chosen technique with the greatest disguise, speed, accuracy and technical efficiency, giving opponents no chance of denying the score. This sheer brilliance in both dribbling and finishing raised them from the reverence shown to the very good to the homage paid to the sublime.
The skills that were to make George Best the most exhilarating British player of his era were learnt on the sprawling Cregagh estate in Belfast, on which he was raised. In the early days Best applied himself to honing his natural talent with a dedication that flatly contradicted his later reputation for skimping on training. As a child, he dribbled a tennis ball through the streets and practiced kicking it against doorknobs until he had mastered striking them dead center, the precondition for the ball returning to him rather than flying off at an angle. Later, he’d aim to hit the crossbar nine times out of ten from the penalty spot, then from 20 yards, then 30 and then 40.

“Every time I went away I was deceiving my mum. I’d tell her I was going to school but I’d be out on the street playing football. I always had a ball on my feet.”

Ronaldo

It is true that only two or three players a decade have ever risen to a level approaching this degree of proficiency. However, because the more enlightened coaching approach contained here has the potential to significantly increase that number, this need not be the case in the future! Certainly, the player with creative genius is an extreme rarity but it is my contention that most youth coaching is so rooted in the “pass and receive” mentality that without a reformation of creative teaching at the very earliest developmental stages and constant, ever increasing pressure on these skills throughout a youth career, this type of player will always be the rare exception.

“That which we persist in doing becomes easier, not that the task itself has become easier, but that our ability to perform it has improved.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The intelligent open minded amongst you will already be asking why is it that most coaches concentrate so heavily on passing and receiving at the earlier stages of development? It is a great question because doing so doesn't make any sense at all! We are educating our players to give the ball away as soon as possible after receiving it, before we have taught them how to keep it until the time is right to make the pass. Why is it that so many coaches are afraid to allow young players to dribble the ball until they lose it? On numerous occasions I’ve heard young players criticized by their coach for dribbling too much when it is the very thing we should be encouraging our young players to do throughout their youth career! The immature player may be soccer's version of a young Michael Jordan, yet a misguided adult, (who the kid respects because he's the coach), is telling him to pass the ball. Did the young Michael Jordan give the ball away at every possible opportunity? Of course not! The young Michael Jordan was dribbling a basketball between his legs at age six and was cut from his high school team as a sophomore because he was, “too greedy”. Why can't we use a little imagination with our five year olds and picture them doing a Maradona, Matthew’s, Cruyff Turn, Puskas or Rivelino move? Why is it that we don't envisage them following their rocket fast fakes with an explosion into space and a technically correct finish low into the far corner of the net and teach them how to do this? For decades the youth coaching community has been conditioned to teach the traditional “pass and receive” approach. Consequently, we have come to regard incredible dribblers and finishers as being born not trained. Soccer coaches as a species seem to believe that such individuals are pre-ordained by some freak of nature, some supreme order of genetics or higher power, to be skilled
superstars. In so believing we fail to recognize that there are many thousands of individuals born each year with the genetic capabilities necessary to be a soccer superstar. But, because we are so insecure with our own ability, (or secure with our own inability), to maximize this potential we use a, "Creative Finishers are Born not Made", rationale to excuse our own failings as educators of supreme creative soccer skills. In sports as in life, the hardest skills to come by are the most creative. After a performance by one of the world’s greatest violinists a female member of the audience told him, “I’d give my life to play the violin like that.” The violinist replied, “Madam, I did!”.

In music the development of the great concert pianist takes decades. In orthopedic surgery the medical genius must study the body and practice the necessary intricate motor skills for many years. Likewise, the creative soccer maestro can only be developed by a long-term emphasis and focus on the most difficult dribbling and shooting techniques above all else. A vision, a set of objectives and goals are utterly essential. What is the end result of all this creativity, what time frame are you working within and how are you going to get there? As the coach you’ve trained this busload of talented individuals but to get to the match, they need a driver who can navigate. That’s you.

“The battle of life is, in most cases fought uphill; and to win it without a struggle were perhaps to win it without honor. If there were no difficulties there would be no success; if there were nothing to struggle for, there would be nothing to be achieved”.
'*Samuel Smiles*

Much of the problem in soccer is due to winning. So many coaches are in the game for their ego. Passing or, at worst kicking the ball forward, achieves the short-term benefit of territorial advantage. This minimizes the risk of giving away possession to the other team in the defensive third. To the coach who is interested in the statistical win this affords only his team with the opportunity to score because, if his players consistently use the "big boot" to get the ball deep into the opponent’s half of the field, there is a greater likelihood that his team will score and the other team won't. By using this method they score more goals than the other team, and the coach can walk tall because his team “beat” the other team. This approach is the “risk free” method of coaching. The players take no risk outside of the attacking third of the field, therefore there is no risk of dispossession in crucial areas. Unfortunately, because of this attitude, there is no risk of any player developing creativity because to do so increases the risk of losing, which cannot be tolerated by the fearful coach.
Chapter Sixteen

Most Coaches Destroy Creativity and Flair

By primarily coaching the team game coaches are teaching the predictable. It is a disciplined, rote approach to developing players. Players who use only one and two touches have to be programmed to get and give the ball very quickly. There is much to be admired in a quick incisive passing game but ball sharing and player interaction should not come before, or at the expense of, developing individual creativity and deception. In life the complete individual goes from dependent to independent, to interdependent, to self-centered leadership and finally to mentorship. As we can see independence clearly comes before interdependence. Yet most soccer coaches put the interdependent stage, (team game), above the independent stage, (development of great individual dribblers and finishers). It should be obvious that the greatest players in team sport history developed the independent skills, (dribbling and shooting), before the interdependent skills, (receiving and passing), and as a result, were later vastly more dominant in the interdependent team stage because opponents were unable to predict whether they would pass or dribble. Furthermore, these legendary players had a more diverse arsenal of weapons and, therefore a greater range of tactical options with which to break down defenses than technically limited “team” players. The player that can beat an opponent or create space with a fake will penetrate more often. Critics of this method claim that creativity is developed at the expense of the team. MJ, Magic, Gretsky, Pele, Maradona and other superstars make a mockery of such theories. To the contrary, it is because of their fantastic creativity and deception that they became world superstars and helped their teams win the big games.

“A team needs to be a solid unit, but like most Brazilian players, my instincts are to express myself, to get forward and play with panache. That's in my blood. For me, technique and intelligence are more vital than physical strength.”

Robinho

By training players to first and foremost play the team game most coaches are actively teaching their players not to be creative. This is because it is impossible to focus on the more mundane team characteristics of soccer and still develop the difficult individual creative aspects of the game. These two facets of the game are diametrically opposed to each other. However, developing tremendously creative, deceptive and confident dribblers and finishers provides the ideal neuromuscular base for the later development of the great one and two touch passer. Unfortunately, for players who have not been trained to take the tremendous creative risks needed to become a great dribbler and finisher, the reverse is not true. The player conditioned to pass can never become truly comfortable on the ball to the same degree as the trained ball artist.

“I cannot pretend to feel impartial about colors. I rejoice with the brilliant ones and am genuinely sorry for the poor browns.”

Sir Winston Churchill
Chapter Seventeen

Legends Lose the Ball and Games to Win Big!

Most societal problems come from individuals with the least education. In contrast, most of the great societal achievements have come from individuals with the highest levels of study and education. The majority of study and education is, by its very nature, self-centered or, put another way, "selfish". However, if young people and their penultimate teams are to achieve optimal potential, it is completely necessary. In perhaps the greatest of all historical achievements NASA assembled a team of scientists from all over the world. Each had a history of many decades of self-centered pursuit of knowledge. When they put man on the moon this team of "self-centered individuals" became the ultimate "team of brilliance". Without many decades of individual selfish study and an "out of the box" non-conformist team mentality, the mind-boggling goal of moon travel would never have been achieved. In the history of mankind all human progress has been the result of intense curiosity and enquiry, plus selfish “out of the box” creative, contrarian thinking. The “Training Soccer Legends” methodology gives the soccer player the greatest amount of self-centered knowledge and skill. Just as the pursuit of academic learning and staying in school instead of taking a job delays the ability of the young person to “win” in the economic sense, so the pursuit of elite soccer skills and phenomenal tactical speed delays the ability of the team to “win” in the statistical sense. While the team is losing the statistical game, the individuals on the team who are taking the risks necessary to learn and play a more creative style, are winning in the developmental sense. Fred Astaire puts it well, “The better you are; the more mistakes you are allowed. Right at the top, if you make enough of them, it's considered to be your style.” The self-concept and confidence that players build while developing exceptional soccer skill positively affects their whole attitude to life. Your child will acquire a high self-concept when he/she becomes brilliant. Your child will make greater positive "team of brilliance" contribution in soccer and life if he or she has phenomenal skill and a great self-concept.

Your child won't develop quicker if he or she gets upset over a statistical loss. Children must be helped to identify the immediate next thing to focus and work on. They must then be encouraged to apply themselves in a positive, proactive, solution oriented manner. Emotional stress is most often paralyzing. This is minimized when the effort to make creative progress is maximized.

A complete life has a general sequence with overlapping borders as follows:

- Dependence
- Independence
- Interdependence
- Leadership (Self-Centered)
- Mentorship (Centered on the growth of others)
In team sports most coaches give only cursory attention to, or attempt to skip, the independence stage because of the incorrect early emphasis on three things, "passing/team", "winning", and "positional play". However, in individual sports there is no emphasis on team, a greater emphasis on technique than winning, (because great technique leads to winning), and no time wasted on the team specific concept of positional play. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is unique because we have an "individual sport" emphasis on exceptional creative technique and tactical speed, (selfish pursuit of knowledge), that eventually guarantees our players the ability and self-concept to be the best of all team players, (the big play making ball wizard), later in their career when it really matters. Each individual player will eventually be a more complete team player if more developmental time is spent in the pursuit of incredible levels of creative skill acquisition and the resulting higher level of independence. This results in a great self-concept that automatically feeds the desire to make a bigger positive team contribution. In the long run individuals that spend the necessary time and effort to complete a higher level of personal knowledge education, have been shown to be the most successful in businesses, marriage and other "team" environments. This has many parallels in team sports. Michael Jordan, Magic Johnston, Wayne Gretsky, Maradona and Pele all developed a much higher level of creative individual, (selfish), technique under pressure, before learning to apply those skills to a higher level of "team" game than ever previously witnessed. However, at age 15 Pele had a nightmare game when playing for the Santos youth team because he was playing too selfishly. Just days later he played a great game for the Santos first team in the Brazilian professional league.

“Football is like a religion to me. I worship the ball, and I treat it like a god. Too many players think of a football as something to kick. They should be taught to caress it and treat it like a precious gem.”

Pele

“To be successful you have to be selfish, or else you never achieve. And once you get to your highest level, then you have to be unselfish. Stay reachable. Stay in touch. Don't isolate.”

Michael Jordan

Eventually a combination of maturity and external forces, (i.e. coach & team peer pressure), will force even the most incredibly gifted but selfish dribbler and goal scorer to balance their individual brilliance with a positive team contribution. However, no amount of maturity can compensate for the failure to develop individual dribbling and finishing brilliance at an early stage in ones soccer career. There has never been an instance of a truly great dribbler and goal scorer who developed these capabilities later in their career.

**Important Quick Note:** The “Training Soccer Legends” program is the only one that is 100% dedicated to teaching and developing the neuromuscular habit of permanent individual dribbling and shooting brilliance before focusing on the "team game". Straying from this 100% focus inevitably results in a dilution of the message and less long-term ability to dominate the immediate opponent. First focusing total concentration on the goal of individual brilliance builds the tremendous foundation of skill and self-concept from which amazing team success can be forged.
Chapter Eighteen

Coaches Teach Players to Pass at the Wrong Time

After many thousands of hours of analysis it has become evident that when a player first wins or receives the ball it is usually the wrong time to pass to a teammate. Ball possession is normally gained in two very different ways:

- By tackling or by intercepting an opposition pass.
- As the result of a pass from a teammate.

The situation after winning the ball by tackling or by intercepting an opposition pass: At the moment that the ball is won by tackling or by intercepting an opposition pass, the ball winner’s teammates should be marking the opposition. It will take a couple of seconds for the ball winner’s teammates to get open and prepare to receive a pass from him. This moment is the best time for the other team to win the ball back because the ball carrier has to dribble for a couple of seconds to keep possession until a teammate can get open. Thus, it can be seen that great dribbling deception is essential for maximizing the chances of retaining team possession immediately after winning the ball. The alternative is to bang the ball hopefully forward or force a risky pass to a teammate who is now being marked by the player he was marking a split second before. By failing to prepare players to hold the ball with deception under pressure, coaches are forcing their pupils to pass before the appropriate moment.

The situation upon receiving the ball from a teammate: In this circumstance there is a better chance of an early passing option, however a teammate will rarely be completely ready to receive an early pass because he will still be adjusting from the change in position made as a result of the previous pass. It is important to understand that the whole picture changes each time a pass is made, therefore a couple of seconds will usually lapse before a teammate gets to the ideal new position for receiving the ball. It is to the detriment of the team if the weak dribbler is forced to pass before the receiving player is in the ideal position and ready to receive the ball. Conversely, it is to the advantage of the team when the strong dribbler is able to hold the ball for the optimum length of time with the appropriate direction of dribble, until the position of release and the timing of the pass is perfect. Failing to prepare players to hold the ball with deception under pressure limits their ability to go to the highest level by forcing them to pass before the appropriate moment.

The strong dribbler has all the options. These are:

- The early passing opportunity.
- The ability to dribble to create space and pass later.
- The option to take on his marker and penetrate himself.

The last two are not viable options for the weak dribbler.
Chapter Nineteen

Preparing for High Level Pressure The Legends Way

Physical Pressure: One of the reasons why players who look very good in local league games and lower level tournaments fall apart when showcasing for College or playing in the State Championship is the increase in physical pressure at the more competitive level. Here the quality of the opposition is higher, therefore the physical pressure is much greater than encountered at a lower level. Players without instantaneous deceptive dribbling options will often fall apart under this type of pressure. As a consequence of being unable to hold the ball, passes become “forced” because the defensive pressure is tighter and tougher to deal with. However, the player who has a great repertoire of fakes and who has been trained to dribble deceptively while under intense defensive pressure in the attacking third of the field, will be able to adjust to the challenges posed by playing at a higher level more easily.

Psychological pressure: Another reason why players struggle at higher levels is the relative degree of psychological challenge. Any player with great individual dribbling and finishing skills is much more likely to be able to cope psychologically with the mental challenges of the big game situation. The ball wizard can rise above his fears and utilize his extra skill and confidence to cope with the daunting psychological challenges involved with performing at an elite level. Furthermore, at the highest level the degree of mental strength needed to hold on to the ball until the appropriate time to pass is so great that most players force the pass before it is appropriate.

Important Quick Note: It is easier to believe in yourself and more difficult to be mentally intimidated by either the circumstances or the opposition if your technical skills, tactical speed, specific fitness, confidence and mental toughness have been maximized in the appropriate training environment.

Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.

King Whitney Jr
Chapter Twenty
Legends Control Play at Both Ends of the Field

The Defender in His Own Defensive Third:
The highest degree of possession turnover occurs defensively and offensively in the final thirds of the field. In the middle third both defensive pressure and the need for offensive speed is reduced, therefore, it is easier to maintain possession through this area. However, because keeping or losing the ball in the defensive third can result in an immediate shot, the physical and psychological pressure in this area of the field is far greater. Here, defenders without any deceptive dribbling abilities will panic under pressure. When a teammate isn’t open for a pass most defenders use the clearance as the chosen method of dealing with pressure. However, this is less than ideal because a clearance normally donates possession to the other team. Giving the ball away to the opposition is a very poor option, therefore all young players must be taught great deceptive dribbling skills and expected to take the dribbling risks necessary to learn how to extricate themselves from high-pressure situations. An elite level of dribbling deception and composure is necessary to keep the ball under pressure. Only when this has been acquired will players be able to retain possession and initiate penetration once the ball has been won.

The Attacker in the Offensive Third:
It cannot be emphasized enough that this is where the greatest defensive pressure is encountered. As attackers get closer to goal defenders usually mark every attacker tightly. Plus there is normally a covering defender in case someone loses their mark or gets beaten. At the highest level the most common loss of possession in the attacking third occurs when the ball is passed inaccurately. By comparison losses of possession while dribbling are relatively few. This is because very few players have the expertise or the confidence, to hold the ball with deception and beat a player. Consequently, penetration by passing is their only viable method of advancing the ball. However, because a combination of deceptive dribbling and incisive passing is so confusing to defenders it is no coincidence that the greatest teams in soccer history have nearly always contained a number of exceptional dribblers. Unfortunately, most teams are devoid of players with enough dribbling ability and confidence to even attempt the dribble. Sadly for the player without excellent dribbling ability, this is the area of the field that most rewards the confident, aggressive, skillful dribbler and most punishes the player with only one predictable method of penetrating i.e. passing. If no teammate is open a purely passing player is lost. However, the deceptive dribbler can at least hold the ball until a teammate gets open and sometimes beat his marker and score. A ball wizard doesn’t have to resort to dumping the ball hopefully into the middle of the penalty area looking for a lucky break. The deceptive dribbler and finisher owns every weapon he needs to break open the defense. When analyzing Pele, Maradona, Garrincha, Cruyff, Platini, Zidane, i.e. the greatest deceptive dribblers, it can be seen that their ratio of dribbling possession retention in the attacking third was the exceptional and decisive factor in making their teams so successful. Each of these great players made far fewer
early passes than their less talented teammates because they rightly believed they could often create a better passing or scoring opportunity by holding on to the ball a little longer. Perhaps as important, is the fact that the defense knew that each of these players was capable of creating and finishing their own opportunities and were unable to set up to take away the predictable pass.

The conventional coaching community offers many off the wall arguments as to why passing is better than dribbling. These coaches criticize the coach who teaches great dribbling and encourages what they deem to be unreasonable risk taking. However, deep down inside, every coach really fears the great dribbler on game day and encouraging risk is the only way to develop great dribblers. Lesser coaches also criticize great dribblers. They talk about “one move wonders” and “ball hogs” but this is just a smoke screen created in an attempt to destroy the credibility of the dribbler. The value of the great dribbler is unquestionable. If the talented ball wizard beats the first defender he draws another defender, thereby creating more offensive space for another attacker.


Author Unknown

The truth is that defenders live in mortal fear of the player who can deceive and beat them in the 1 v 1 situation. Great dribblers have historically received so much attention because they helped the teams they played on become very successful. Initially many were vilified but eventually they were recognized as major catalysts for this success. Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Rivaldo, Figo, George Best, Maradona, Pele, Platini, Kempes, Garrincha all made key dribbling and goal scoring contributions that enabled their teams to make the transition from good to great. In fact, with Pele and Garrincha on the same team, Brazil never lost a game!

Important Quick Note: “Great spirits have always encountered opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly.”

Albert Einstein
Chapter Twenty-One

The Legends Mantra
Relentlessly Forward No Retreat!

“Training Soccer Legends” is a “Go For It” philosophy. Time is precious! However, many are the number of creative skills to be conquered. Becoming a Legend is the dream. Penetration is the goal. Why then go backwards or sideways? Those are directions for ordinary players not for the budding ball wizard. Because time is so short and the creative challenges are many, we have eliminated all backwards and sideways combination plays from the Legends developmental process and curriculum. College and professional recruiters are looking for those special players who can create, and/or finish, goal-scoring opportunities. Therefore, we can’t afford to waste our player’s precious developmental time on keep away drills involving trail passes and switching the point of attack, when the hardest and most vital component of the game is the ability to penetrate and score. Players who have been encouraged to “go for it” and think in terms of driving relentlessly forward, are those who stand the greatest chance of learning how to dribble, pass, or combine the two, to penetrate defenses and create goal scoring opportunities.

We want our players, whatever their position, to attack their immediate opponent. Like waves crashing on the shore we want to keep coming at them. We ask our players to understand that if they are committed, both individually and in numbers, to constantly go at the opposition defense, they will sooner or later create goal-scoring opportunities. We train our players to create numbers up situations with deceptive dribbling and passing technique, speed of play and penetration in the immediate vicinity of the ball, no matter how crowded that area is. We avoid training patience and safe possession. We don’t want our players to play it safe. Safe plays are fearful plays! These are taught by coaches and made by players who are afraid of the negative consequences of losing the ball. On the contrary, our coaches are afraid that our players won’t take enough of the risks necessary to learn how to beat defenders quickly in the crowded penalty area. We are so scared that this failure might occur that, for a significant part of their youth career, no matter where they are on the field, we make our players play without fear and take an opponent on with a recognizable fake every time they have the ball.

"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face."
Eleanor Roosevelt

There is no place in our program for training defenders to kick the ball out of play when they are under pressure in their defensive half or other similar negative tactics. This teaches a kid how to “chicken-out”. We develop players who relish the opportunity to test themselves against the very best opponents, in the most dangerous areas of the field. During the phase when we are building tremendous ball wizardry we congratulate and celebrate with those players who will attempt a Maradona Turn on their own goal line. No matter what the level of opposition or pressure we
want to see the courage necessary to become great. It takes guts, personality, confidence and character to try the riskiest move in the most dangerous area!! Taking the risk of losing the ball and giving up a goal in the ultimate “Danger Area” is like trying a double back somersault in gymnastics. When performing the “Double Back Somersault” the safety of a firm footing on earth disappears and there’s no guarantee that you will land on your feet and a serious possibility you will land on your head. Similarly the Maradona Turn involves a tremendously difficult neuromuscular 270 degree rotation while one or perhaps two opponents are bumping, kicking and tripping you, or desperately trying to rip the ball away. When attempting a Maradona Turn in tight circumstances, contact and falls are inevitable. Imagine the degree of courage and bravery it takes to try this move for the first time in front of a crowded touchline of spectators, opponents and teammates. Then try to transport yourself into the future and imagine how much guts and confidence it takes to use this move when that touchline is packed with college coaches looking for recruits.

“Courage is not the towering oak that sees storms come and go; it is the fragile blossom that opens in the snow.”
Alice Mackenzie

The only one way to create players who are capable of performing these types of minor miracles on a game-by-game basis is to attack with reckless abandon throughout the developmental years. No matter what age a young player starts playing, the moves and fakes should initially be a prerequisite of every possession and, later in their youth soccer career, a highly desirable component of most possessions. Safe possession play, while probing the opponent’s defenses for an opening or weakness, is a slow death to the ability to play at speed with deception at the highest level. Players who are encouraged to play this game will sign their own high-level soccer death certificate. By playing in such a conservative manner they will bring their rapid creative development and progression towards the highest levels of the game to a screeching halt!

“He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.”
Harold Wilson

One example of our “Go For It” mentality is where we avoid teaching our younger players how to play the ball back to the goalie when there’s a forward on her back. In this situation we encourage them to use a Cruyff Turn, Puskas or other viable move to deceive the forward. In this way space and time is created for the penetrating pass. Consequently the defender learns to be a more skilled and effective individual and the catalyst for a new attack. To our coaches the development of the individual player’s skill and self-belief is worth far more than the thrill of winning the game. In good conscience we cannot ask that player to make the easy or expedient play and short circuit her own development so that the team can win. To us that’s exploiting the kid for adult ego gratification instead of promoting intelligent risk for personal growth. We view coaches who do this before the player has become truly proficient at using her deceptive dribbling skills, as users not developers, of children. This view is more important because most players will play high school soccer for 3 months each year during the last four years of their
youth career. Most high school coaches are hell bent on winning, therefore practices and games are heavily geared towards playing a very low risk strategy. Some high school coaches are so afraid that the dribbler may lose the ball in the one v one that they won’t allow their players to dribble and take players on even in the attacking third of the field. They prefer passes to be hopefully dumped into the opposition’s penalty area. In the Legends club we recognize that many ODP or high school coaches discourage individual risk and our time with the players is too short, therefore we must work harder to prepare players to take the individual risks needed to be great. We create players who can take intelligent risks despite another coach’s fear of the creative unknown. If a kid can take a player on while the coach is shouting at her to “pass” that’s guts. That desire to forge relentlessly forward with tremendous creativity is what will make her stand out when she showcases for college. Our ratio of college scholarship and professional draft success has proven that college and pro’ coaches will recruit the courageous and gifted dribbler and combination play-maker who finds ways to penetrate crowded defenses in ways that those trained to “play it safe” will never do. College coaches who continue to encourage and utilize our Legends trained players to the utmost of their creative capabilities, get a player who can maintain possession anywhere on the field because their deceptive dribbling skills allow them to escape pressure, or beat players, in ways that are extremely rare and unusual. This enables them to play with composure and initiate attacks where others would panic or clear the ball out of play. This deceptive dribbling and quick passing talent allows them to play through pressure and set up attacks. Finally, the capability to deceive a defender, explode into space and hit the appropriate shot, empowers the Legends trained player to make the dribbling and finishing play that convinces many recruiters that they can’t live without her.

**Important Quick Note:** There is no short cut to developing the player who can penetrate with a great dribble or quick combination and finish. If you waste one moment of their developmental time by encouraging “safe play” it’s unforgivable. You have to lose the game to win the war. You have to take great risks and lose the ball to become a great player. The main goal of the game is to score. The goal of the individual should be to become a player who can create and convert goal-scoring opportunities. Every time a player passes sideways or backwards, every time a player dribbles away from the opposition’s goal, that player loses an opportunity to learn how eventually to turn a high-risk, low percentage play, into a low risk, high percentage play. The Legends philosophy of forging relentlessly forward provides players with the skills and experience to gradually turn high risk plays into medium risk plays and eventually low risk plays. There’s only one way to learn this type of ability…relentlessly penetrate, “GO FOR IT!!”
Chapter Twenty-Two

The Quick Fix Mentality
Winning Versus Development

What It Takes To Be No. 1

"Winning is not a sometime thing; it's an all the time thing. You don't win once in a while; you don't do things right once in a while; you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.

There is no room for second place. There is only one place in my game, and that's first place. I have finished second twice in my time at Green Bay, and I don't ever want to finish second again. There is a second place bowl game, but it is a game for losers played by losers. It is and always has been an American zeal to be first in anything we do, and to win, and to win, and to win.

Every time a football player goes to play his trade he's got to play from the ground up - from the soles of his feet right up to his head. Every inch of him has to play. Some guys play with their heads. That's O.K. You've got to be smart to be number one in any business. But more importantly, you've got to play with your heart, with every fiber of your body. If you're lucky enough to find a guy with a lot of head and a lot of heart, he's never going to come off the field second.

Running a football team is no different than running any other kind of organization - an army, a political party or a business. The principles are the same. The object is to win - to beat the other guy. Maybe that sounds hard or cruel. I don't think it is.

It is a reality of life that men are competitive and the most competitive games draw the most competitive men. That's why they are there - to compete. To know the rules and objectives when they get in the game. The object is to win fairly, squarely, by the rules - but to win.

And in truth, I've never know a man worth his salt who in the long run, deep down in his heart, didn't appreciate the grind, the discipline. There is something in good men that really yearns for discipline and the harsh reality of head to head combat.

I don't say these things because I believe in the "brute" nature of man or that men must be brutalized to be combative. I believe in God, and I believe in human decency. But I firmly believe that any man's finest hour, the greatest fulfillment of all that he holds dear, is that moment when he has worked his heart out in a good cause and lies exhausted on the field of battle - victorious."

Vince Lombardi
It’s a great quote but with developing players there are many pitfalls associated with focusing on the team win.

This easiest way to get short-term “success” in this winning conditioned society is beat the other team. So the coach “uses” the players. The kid with the big foot is told to kick the ball as far down the field as possible. The sprinter with the powerful shot waits for the kick, beats the defender to the ball and boots a goal. The team wins and everyone goes home happy. This is a scenario reproduced on soccer fields all over the world every day. The coach can do a multitude of things in the short term to get the statistical win. However, nearly all of these things will impede the development of the great individual and eventually great team player.

In youth soccer everything the coach teaches should help all players in their quest to develop the personal qualities needed to succeed at the very highest level.
Chapter Twenty-Three

The Negative Consequence of Society’s Love to Win

Every time we open a newspaper to the sports page we see the wins and losses of teams and individuals highlighted in the headlines. T.V. sports coverage is all about who is likely to win, how they will achieve the win, what the chances are of winning and who won. Because of this we are conditioned or brainwashed to prize the statistical win above all of the essential components that maximize the developmental sporting experience. Even at the adult level, pursuing the win causes major problems. Performance enhancing drugs, cheating and illegal betting scandals regularly get widespread publicity. Yet many adults still measure their children’s success from an extremely cynical and negative win/loss frame of reference. By doing this you guarantee your precious offspring a career of emotional peaks and valleys. Children judged by wins and losses will alternate between elation at the win and depression at the loss. If children are to be maximally challenged to develop they need to be focused on doing their best and encouraged to compete at a level where the statistical wins and losses should be approximately equal in proportion. There is no benefit to winning most games played. If a team is winning a very high percentage of their games it only proves that it is playing competition beneath its level. If winning the game is the measuring stick, half the time our kids will be emotionally satisfied and the other half of the time they will be demoralized. This emotional roller coaster is counter-productive to learning and consistent positive growth.

This is why the only approach that makes educational sense is one that focuses on individual creative moments of success. In this “calculated positive progress” mode of coaching the great coach focuses on the following:

- First; the effort, because in the immortal words of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, “The most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well”.

- Second; creative and correct technical execution because it has been said that, “Great creativity is the product of exceptional technique.” (Michaelangelo).

- Third; correct option selection, (tactical choice); Each time the child makes their best effort there is a moment of success to be prized, no matter what the outcome. Once the effort to perform a creative skill becomes automatic, the eventual ability to perform it with greater technical efficiency will gradually improve. As the performance improves, less attention has to be paid to the mechanics of the skill and more focus can be given to addressing the situation surrounding the play and teaching the player to make the right choice of skill.
However, in a society that prizes winning to such a great degree, the parental and peer pressure to win can serve only as a block to the young child’s self-concept and willingness to take the risks involved with developing fantastic individual skill. When winning is the emphasis most children won’t even make the effort to be creative because the downside is too damaging. The poor coach discourages dribbling and fakes, the misguided parent groans when the ball is lost, the other players learn to point the finger of blame at the errant player. All because winning is so important and pervasive in today’s world.

As a great coach you need to be even more supportive of your team when those great skills dry up for a while or are less successful. Prepare to be hung as a scapegoat one week and praised to the ends of the earth the next. You cannot become paralyzed by fear of failure. Success will only come if you can also live with the consequences of failure. Everyone will need to be pushed to only do their very best and to be able to do it their way. That’s a rule. You can’t tell your players they can only be creative in a particular way or style. If they succeed, it doesn’t matter how, within moral and ethical standards, but if they fail, the house will come down around your ears. Maverick, creative groups are magnets to jealously, gossip and sniping. When things don’t go well the critics will tear you apart. Can you deal with that?

“The life history of the individual is first and foremost an accommodation to the patterns and standards traditionally handed down in his community.”

Ruth Benedict

The great coach doesn’t care about winning the game. This rare animal is a true mentor with only the best interests of each individual in mind. This coach tells the players “Do a fake on every possession” until his players have mastered many ways to beat opponents. His teams give up many goals at the younger ages because they take the individual risks necessary to learn to perform magic tricks with the ball and reach their ultimate potential. It is inevitable that when the players on a team take great risks before their creative skills have been refined they will lose the ball and probably lose the game. However, the simple act of taking risks and daring greatly in the pursuit of the ability to dominate an opponent, will reap dividends in the long run. These players are always encouraged. Encouraged to be creative, encouraged to play without fear of failure, encouraged to make mistakes and encouraged to make the errors that are really necessary to truly learn and grow. This approach is one of unconditional love and permeates the relationships of all truly wonderful mentors and their students. Whether the dynamic is between a parent and child, teacher and pupil or coach and player, the child knows he is loved when he is genuinely supported through life’s inevitable mistakes. When he loses the ball, the other team scores, and the coach says, “Fantastic effort it takes real guts to take a risk there”, the player knows that the coach cares for them not his own ego gratification. Conversely, the child knows that the coach’s love is conditional when she loses the ball and reaction of the coach is negative. On the one hand the positive coach’s response promotes future risk taking and maximizes eventual confidence and growth. On the other hand, the negative reaction creates an atmosphere of fear, destroys confidence and discourages the willingness to take risks. This results in a serious inhibition of skill development and a “coach induced” failure to realize maximum potential.
“Being creative means moving away from a dependence solely on the rational, the planned, the low risk but well thought. And isn’t it only the world’s most creative organizations that succeed and last?”
Graham Thomas

“Don’t learn to do, but learn in doing. Let your falls not be on a prepared ground, but let them be bona fide falls in the rough and tumble of the world.”
Samuel Butler

“More people than might be supposed are deeply troubled by the fear of failure. It is a dangerous fear to have working against you because it can cause the personality to freeze and therefore induce the very failure you fear.

Everyone is bound to fail at times and the important question is, how do you react to failure? Actually a failure can be an excellent teacher—we can learn from our mistakes how not to do a thing. Then too, we can learn from our successes how a thing is done right. It is important to seek persistently within both failure and success to discover new insights and know-how. You can bring great accomplishments out of what at first seemed overwhelming failure; but if you permit failure to continue as failure, it will be failure in outcome forever.

So when you experience a failure, take a perceptive look at it, ask yourself why you failed, then go back at it again wiser, more competent, and never in any sense entertaining the thought that you will continue to fail. Such practice strengthens you in the process of thinking failure out and thinking success in.

There is no satisfaction in this world quite like overcoming the fear of failure. If you prepare for a frontal assault by planning, learning, thinking, studying, working and believing, you will have all you need to conquer the plaguing fear of failure.”
Author unknown
Chapter Twenty-Four

Winning or Team Versus Creative Skill and Tactics

Because fear of failure is a major factor in teams where winning is important and because players who are focused on passing the ball very quickly to a teammate never develop incredible creative and deceptive dribbling skills, tactical options for these players will always be limited. Players in this type of philosophy are never encouraged to take the risks necessary to develop tremendous dexterity and confidence on the ball. These players will struggle to dribble by feel, under pressure, in the fashion of players taught to be ball wizards. Players trained to pass quickly and play in certain expedient ways to attain the win, will perhaps enjoy short-term statistical winning success but in the long-term will be limited in their ability to attack with a myriad of tactical options and diverse arsenal of weapons.

“The young think that failure is the Siberian end of the line, banishment from all the living, and tend to do what I then did—which was to hide.”

James Baldwin

It should be obvious that the great dribbler is able to create extra penetrating options, whereas the player who can only pass to advance the ball is limited only to those options provided by teammates. When passing teams meet an opponent with a great pass defense the offence goes nowhere. Defense is easier than attack because it is far simpler to destroy than create. Furthermore, as the years go by, it is much easier to defend than attack because, as players mature psychologically and develop a greater level of aggression, teams improve rapidly in their defensive capabilities. This is one of the major reasons why many teams who dominate using the power passing game early in their youth career have a really tough time continuing their winning ways as the kids get older.

In the long run the only way to overcome mature pass defenses is to have players in the squad who are able to beat opponents with a deceptive dribble or an incisive pass. This causes great confusion because, if opponents man mark to take away the pass, the team of accomplished dribblers and finishers can go one on one with great success. However, if the defending team sets up to cover the opposition dribble, a team of excellent passers can combine to create the goal scoring opportunity. Therefore, if you have a team of great dribblers, finishers and passers, the type of defensive set up employed doesn’t matter because your team will have all the options with which to penetrate the defense.
Chapter Twenty-Five

Reduce Cost and Expand Benefits The Legends Way

There are many components to becoming a great player e.g. pattern plays, set plays, systems of play, positional responsibilities, technique, tactics, speed/strength, endurance etc. However, if maximizing potential is to be possible, all game components have to be evaluated from a cost/benefit perspective and the most beneficial aspects of development focused on at each stage.

The “Training Soccer Legends” hypothesis is that the primary and most important stage of the learning process involves teaching and grooving the most important creative dribbling and shooting techniques and gradually subjecting them to ever increasing pressure. This is because great skill, (successful application of technique under the pressure of opposition), is the essential foundation and determines an individual’s ability to maximize his or her potential and altitude within the sport.

When choosing practice components the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum has been created using a “what do we give up” perspective. For example most coaches will incorporate set play practice at some point in the development of their team. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach doesn’t waste any developmental time on set plays because the next team our players play for probably won’t use any of our set plays. Therefore, if we taught set plays we would be focusing on an area of the game with no long-term benefit to the individual. To do this we would have to rob our players of the opportunity to refine their dribbling, shooting & quick penetrating combination plays. These skills are benefits that our players are guaranteed to need at the higher level and are a far better practice choice than practicing set plays they may never use again after they leave our program.

Even when we give our whole focus to the wide range of offensive technical skills essential to the creative development of the players, we know that their skills at speed, under pressure still need to be refined further when they leave the Legends to play at a higher level. This is why we are determined not to waste one moment of their precious time on those aspects of traditional coaching that are purely focused on achieving the team statistical win. The main purpose of pursuing the statistical win at the expense of practical career long developmental benefits is ego gratification. Great coaches and mentors do not need the benefit of an ego boost to such a degree that they are prepared to hurt players by sacrificing long-term growth, for short-term victories.

Many of soccer’s tactics and strategies are team specific and taught with the sole objective of winning games. Examples of such tactics are offensive and defensive set plays, the offside trap, specific systems of play, etc. The list of tactical and strategic coaching options that have no benefit to the player on the next team they will play for is extensive. Our coaches avoid spending time on these components of the game because, from a long-term benefit perspective, these areas of the game have no value to the player, i.e. he will probably rarely if ever need to use them again after moving on to his next team.
We recognize that, even with a total focus on only those skills and tactics that will provide players with long-term benefits, many do not attend every practice nor do they practice their moves and shooting on a daily basis as requested. Therefore, to split player focus even more by focusing on short-term wins or instant gratification motivated tactics, will only cost each player a certain degree of the extra creative skill and tactical speed that he would have acquired in the time spent focusing on other less beneficial aspects of the game.

As in all clubs our players participate in other sports and have other club, academic or social interests that take up much of their time. My own kids love soccer but miss many games and practices because of 4H, school choir, plays, cross country, track & field, dance, gymnastics, etc. Even with constant reminders, they probably only do their soccer skill homework on average two to three times per week. Therefore, it is essential that the training curriculum constantly focuses on, and prioritizes, those skills that will help the young player reach the highest level her personal potential will allow. The Training Soccer Legends approach is so technical and creative because by far the greatest benefit to their development and long-term aspirations will come from working on the game’s most creative and difficult skills. Sid Aaron, the Head of Phys' Ed' at the University of Wales, pointedly reminded me as I was about to run 20 miles in preparation for a marathon, that "skill is everything". I finished the marathon but never forgot the lesson.

The added bonus is that the hard work necessary to develop a great technical repertoire of skill also builds specific soccer fitness, while creating and grooving the vital neuromuscular pathways necessary for developing a greater tactical range of "Big Play" making abilities.

As a frame of reference for “Training Soccer Legends” I have examined the developmental background of many of the greatest players from the last five decades. The great players I have researched focused almost entirely on creative ball work in the earlier stages of development and continued to be significantly more selfish than their peers into their mid-teens. The available literature and other sources about their background refer to the long hours they spent working on their creative abilities with the ball. Many did not play a great degree of organized soccer until they were 13 or 14 years of age. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach has evaluated the way in which these great players developed their abilities against the more common traditional ways to train players and chosen the method that obviously has the greatest long-term individual benefit and the lowest long-term cost.

“Only dead fish go with the flow.”
Malcolm Muggeridge

For example because of its cost to skill and tactical speed we have long avoided the practice of coaching just fitness. Additionally, because of the cost to skill, fitness and competitive psychology, we have avoided practices that teach only tactics. Furthermore, because of the cost to skill, tactical speed and fitness, we have long steered away from coaching just psychology. Our practice time is totally geared towards multi-tasking i.e. learning and achieving many technical, tactical, physiological and psychological benefits at the same time. This is because
specializing on one area of the game only benefits one aspect of the total player and actually allows the other components of the game to erode. From the end of the first stage on, the “Training Soccer Legends” objective is to make sure that every player gets the optimum benefit in all four key aspects of soccer i.e. technique, tactics, physiology and psychology, from every practice. However, it must be understood that great creative technique is the foundation skill that leads to the immense flair and improvisation that allows players to achieve their maximum potential. Consequently, the development of great dribbling and shooting technique has to be the one and only focus of the program until these techniques have been mastered to a significant level of technical accomplishment. Even after players have focused on these skills for many years, great dribbling and shooting technique continues to be the crucial component that needs to be constantly refined and improved.

Because formal practice time is limited, players need to work on technique in their own time. By practicing intensely in team situations and on their own, they also realize maximum benefits to their soccer specific agility, coordination, plyometrics, reaction time, anaerobic threshold etc. The key to great individual skill learning is soccer specificity. If our goal is to create very effective creative players we have to first keep them focused on specific, creative technical actions and later incorporate the key tactics, physiology and psychology into the practice and game situation while structuring practices to ensure a tremendous number of creative touches under pressure. To the degree that players are robbed of the specific focus on developing many individual, and later team components in every practice, is the degree to which their soccer abilities will suffer.

There are many ways to improve important components of the game to a limited degree. For example speed trainers do wonderful things for many athletes where a few percentage points in speed are absolutely crucial. Furthermore, there are numerous sports where development of strength is absolutely essential. American Football would be one. However, for the soccer player who wants to go to the very top of the game there is one paramount historical capability that transcends the value of all others. This is the acquisition of supreme creative technical skill. To deny this and encourage our players to split their focus away from the development of creative genius is to dilute the effectiveness of what we do because it erodes the very skill base that is essential as the launching pad to the stars. If we focus to any degree solely on tactics or fitness at the expense of skill development it would be a regressive step and the cost versus benefit consequence would be a dilution of the total skill capabilities that have served our players so well. The result would be less practice and attention paid to the creative skills and a greater focus on many less beneficial aspects of the game that a player may never need in order to make the “big play” or impress a college or professional scout. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach advocates that fantastic individual creative technique is the key component in making a positive contribution to the team and in being recognized for promotion to a higher level of play. Exceptional creative technique can only be achieved by a total initial focus in this area of specialization, followed by years of integrating these skills into the game in a way that incorporates the key tactical, physiological and psychological components at ever increasing speeds under escalating levels of pressure.
Our single-minded focus on specific creative individual play has set the Legends apart from all other soccer programs. Our certain knowledge is that all players would be better served taking the time they spend working specifically on tactics, fitness or psychology and replacing it with a curriculum of skill refinement with tactics, fitness & psychology woven into the fabric of each skill practice. Even the most remarkable players we have developed left us with a long way to go to develop a complete repertoire of creative technical skills. Potential for improvement in technical skill is unlimited. Most players could improve dribbling and ball striking ability to many times their current level if they spent all their practice time in situations that enhance these skills. When weighing the cost/benefit equation and the best coaching approach, we are doing players a disservice by working on something that can be improved by only a limited degree at a younger age and learned very quickly as they mature (i.e. tactics), over something that is almost unlimited in its capacity for improvement at any age and best learned early (i.e. creative skill).

If other aspects of the game are coached, all players will make some initial improvement in those aspects of the game and feel good about their improvement. However, this positive growth and the good feelings associated with working on these other areas shouldn't be mistaken for the best long-term course of action. As with all types of learning there will be the relatively rapid early development, then a plateau in development, after which all further growth comes in small increments after much hard work. Once players are able to bend, chip, drive, volley & half-volley a ball accurately with the top, inside and outside of the foot and able to execute all the “Training Soccer Legends” moves at full pace, there is good sense in focusing to a greater degree on other areas of the game in order to capitalize on these skills. However, most players have a very long road to travel before their technical development reaches that level and, even if we focus them exclusively on skill development for many years, they may never reach the level of creative technical ability necessary to play professionally.

Important Quick Note: In developing our current curriculum the cost/benefit equation has been a constant yardstick with which to measure the value of each and every component of the program. All choice of practice content should be looked at from the objective backwards. The objective or goal of the great coach should always be the highest one. All teachers should approach their subject and students with the highest goals in mind. Our “Training Soccer Legends” goal is to develop the player who is able to make the big play in “Maradona like style” in the World Cup final. If this objective is ever to become a reality for our players we will have to continue to examine the cost and benefit of every single practice component in relation to each player’s long-term development. Only then will every practice challenge our players to maximize their potential.

“Yet persistently a few men awaken - men who look back at greatness, are encouraged by reflecting on it, and feel themselves blessed, as though human life were a splendid thing, as though the loveliest fruit of this bitter plant were the knowledge that before them one man lived his life with pride and strength, another profoundly, and a third with compassion and benevolence -- but all bequeathed the same lesson: the man who is ready to risk his existence lives most beautifully.”

*Friedrich Nietzsche*
Chapter Twenty-Six

Mode Fixation
The Danger of Always Passing the Ball

The soccer coaching community has largely coached flair and improvisation out of the game. These creative qualities have been replaced with passing “mode fixation”. Passing has been chosen as the primary offensive coaching mode because:

- Passing is easy to coach
- Passing is low risk
- Passing is psychologically less challenging
- Passing involves easier neuromuscular skills
- Switching between passing and dribbling modes is difficult
- Most coaches don’t understand how to coach or demonstrate the moves

“There is little place in the political scheme of things for an independent, creative personality, for a fighter. Anyone who takes that role must pay a price.”
Shirley Chisholm

Passing Is Easy To Coach
When compared to dribbling, the techniques of passing are easy to coach. Most coaches don’t understand all the intricacies of the various Legends fakes and moves. The great dribbling coach needs the equivalent of the elite Olympic Gymnastics coach’s knowledge and understanding of the miniscule adjustments needed to perform all the difficult neuromuscular techniques necessary to create space or beat an opponent. Unfortunately most coaches were themselves educated in a passing approach so have little knowledge of the essential refinements and movement patterns involved with these elite skills. Furthermore, the game can be played without dribbling, therefore, coaches feel that they would have to more then double their work by teaching both the dribbling and passing game. Not only would they have to teach a large repertoire of fakes and moves, but they would also have to teach their players when to pass as opposed to when to dribble. Therefore, it is much simpler to focus on just passing and easier still to focus on kicking the ball up field.

Passing Is Low Risk
To most youth coaches the greatest fear is of losing the game. The second deadly sin is not being a team player. To make sure the team doesn’t lose, coaches teach their players to clear the ball, with one long kick, as far away from their goal as possible. Only when the ball is sufficiently far away from their goal will most coaches allow the players to play an intelligent passing game. With every forward pass the ball travels away from the team’s goal and the coach’s fear of giving up a goal is lessened. However, with every dribbling touch, the ball doesn’t travel nearly
as far away from the “danger area”, so when players dribble, the stress level of the win motivated coach is higher. Because of this fear the passing player is honored with the positive acknowledgement “he’s a good team player”. However, the dribbler is insulted with the label “he’s a ball hog!” This is why some coaches allow only their forwards to dribble while encouraging everyone else to pass or kick. Unfortunately, many coaches are so programmed to coach for the win, that they won’t allow any of their players to take the dribbling risks necessary to be a ball wizard.

*It is better to be high-spirited even though one makes more mistakes, than to be narrow-minded and all too prudent. Do not quench your inspiration and your imagination; do not become the slave of your model.*

Vincent van Gogh

**Passing Is Psychologically Less Challenging**

In soccer passing is the ultimate “handing off” or avoidance of responsibility, while dribbling and finishing are the ultimate embracement or acceptance of responsibility. From a psychological perspective it is much easier to avoid responsibility by passing instead of dribbling. Therefore, it is much easier for the coach to encourage passing or kicking because it lessens the fear of giving up the easy goal. It is also easier for the player to pass or kick because, during the earlier stages of development, the more difficult skill of dribbling involves a greater risk of losing possession. Furthermore, dribbling the ball involves being the focus of attention and exposes the dribbler to greater analysis and criticism from teammates, coaches and spectators. This, often negative public evaluation, is something that many players will avoid at all costs. Therefore, they will choose the easier passing or kicking option.

*Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage that a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Passing Involves Easier Neuromuscular Skills**

Passing involves far less pressure because it calls for a maximum of one or two touches on the ball with some degree of space and time. However, deceptive dribbling in the attacking third involves many touches on the ball and is performed with highly restricted space and time because of the immediate, intense, physical pressure from defenders. Furthermore, the techniques of passing involve much simpler neuromuscular patterns than used in the complicated repertoire of world-class fakes and moves needed to create space or beat a player. For this reason alone most players will choose the easier passing option. It is much simpler to perform the technique of passing with less pressure, than the more difficult techniques of dribbling with much greater defensive pressure. Consequently the vast majority of players will choose the passing option because it is a less complicated neuromuscular technique with less potential for failure.
“One who fears failure limits his activities.”
Automobile tycoon Henry Ford

Switching Between The Passing and Dribbling Modes Is More Difficult
Another reason that both coaches and players are more comfortable with focusing totally on the passing game is its simplicity. The game is much more complicated when players are expected to choose between two completely different methods of advancing the ball. When both dribbling and passing are encouraged as methods for advancing the ball the coach has to be a more complete teacher. Furthermore, the players have to be prepared to analyze a greater number of technical and tactical options before choosing the appropriate way of solving the problem. It is far easier to fixate and concentrate on just passing because the alternative is so much more diverse, daunting and fear inducing for both coaches and players alike.

Most Coaches Don’t Understand How To Coach Or Demonstrate The Moves
The moves are the “rocket science” of soccer technique. The Maradona Turn is to soccer what the double back somersault is to the gymnast or the 360 degree dunk is to a basketball player. The full repertoire of “Training Soccer Legends” moves involve very difficult neuromuscular patterns that few coaches fully understand. Most coaches will have only a rudimentary understanding of how to coach these extremely difficult dribbling techniques and develop player confidence in them to the degree needed to guarantee their usage in games. The complicated nature of these skills, a lack of understanding of how to teach them, plus the inability to demonstrate them, discourages the traditional coach from introducing them to his players and from spending the practice time necessary to master them.

“Besides pride, loyalty, discipline, heart, and mind, confidence is the key to all the locks.”
Joe Paterno

Important Quick Note: Most coaches and players will choose the passing game because it involves:

- Less chance and fear of errors
- Lower risk of losing games heavily during the earlier learning stages
- Fewer options and greater simplicity
- Less acceptance of responsibility
- Less knowledge
- Easier skills
- Less imagination and problem solving ability

Unfortunately for players it is only by taking the greatest risks that the greatest successes will be achieved. That’s why the great players in soccer and all similar sports are the ones who can dribble and score. They took the risks, they paid the price and they became ball wizards and “Soccer Legends”.
Chapter Twenty-Seven

Every Time is the Right Time to Use a Move

One of the big differences between the conventional approach to developing players and the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy is in the concept of a “right time” to use a creative dribbling move. Fakes and moves under pressure are soccer’s neuromuscular equivalent to rocket science and therefore, incredibly difficult to perform with success under pressure. Consequently, if individual learning and creative success is to be maximized, every possession is the right time to attempt a move while players are developing this ability. Some teams only allow their players to attempt fakes and moves in the attacking third. It is a rare coach who allows his players to attempt risky moves in their own defensive half of the field. In the Legends approach we are totally committed to developing incredible individual deception, creativity and confidence on the ball as the primary priority and foundation for later success. Because the development of great creative technique and the transfer of that technique to games is the objective, for many years we insist upon and demand that our players use moves on every possession, no matter where they are on the field of play. This is a crucial difference between our program and others with a less emphasized creative dimension!

Please note: We insist and demand that our players take the risks they need to in order to develop incredible creativity and the self-confidence to use it.

Most other programs do not even teach the independent creativity we believe is essential as a base, or starting point, for later brilliance. Some teach the moves but are wasting most of their time in doing so because, when it comes to the game, most of the field is “off limits” for those moves. That’s akin to teaching the player how to shoot in practice and then telling him not to in the game. Even the more enlightened programs in the world take two steps forward and one step back because they merely “allow” their players to attempt moves in games instead of “demanding and insisting” that the players try their fakes every time they get the ball until the fake becomes a habit. This failure to make performing the moves a priority is the reason that other programs are largely wasting their time by even including the moves in their curriculum.

The logic is quite simple. Performing a fake and move under pressure in the game is very daunting to the majority of young players. Many factors make deceptive dribbling the hardest skill to execute. These factors include the potential for public embarrassment, the technical complexity of the skill, the psychological acceptance of the responsibility to lead and intense pressure from defenders. As an alternative option passing is very attractive because it limits the potential of public embarrassment. It is a much easier physical skill and “passes on” the responsibility to a teammate. Because of all these factors the “Training Soccer Legends” method advocates that all players attempt a dribbling fake on every possession. This continues until all the deceptive dribbling techniques have been permanently grooved to the point of constant repetition and success under the pressure of high-level competition. That’s why, until a fake has
been mastered, the right time to do a fake is every time. If coaches restrict players to attempting fakes and moves in only certain areas of the field before the move is well learned, the skill will never be transferred from practice into the game. Players brought up in this restricted approach will only have the odd one or two moves in their repertoire when they are 16-18. If using all the moves is not mandated they won't be able to perform a whole repertoire of moves under pressure.

With this “mandated move” approach you will give up many goals and lose games because initially you will often get robbed of the ball when attempting fakes in your defensive half. However, you must do this or restrict the creative developmental opportunity of your players to one half or less of every game. Avoid prioritizing the tactical concept of when and where on the field to do a move until the kids have developed the ability to perform the fakes successfully, at speed, under pressure. Strange as it may seem we tell our developing players that they must attempt a fake before passing even when standing in front of their own goal.

Taking intelligent risks, stepping outside one’s comfort zone and accepting leadership responsibility, are all proven educational concepts. However, because winning the game is the objective in team sports, too many coaches pursue the tactically expedient method of achieving the win and short circuit player development to get the winning statistic. For the first fifteen years of my more than thirty-year coaching career, I restricted the areas of the field and tactical situations where a move was acceptable. Consequently, when they were young my teams and players were statistical winners. However, they lost their winning edge as they moved into and through their teenage years. Conversely, the KC Legends players I have coached to be ball wizards over the past 15 years had much less statistical success when younger, but enjoyed far greater individual and team success at the higher levels during their early and later teens.

It takes years of total dedication to deceptive dribbling and finishing to create the "big play maker". In academic education the teaching of individual technical excellence consumes many years. Soccer should be no different. The tactical learning component of life, (and soccer), should always follow the technical learning stage. Unfortunately most coaches put the team, (tactical), and winning, (ego based reward), above the development of incredible, unrestricted, creative learning. These flawed programs fail to recognize that the most difficult penetrating tactical options are totally dependent on learning the hardest and most daunting creative technical skills of the game. Success in the key tactical arenas of life, (career, family etc), are dependent on the foundation of learning how to read, write, communicate, add, subtract, etc, (technical options). Soccer is no different! Therefore, we must challenge our players to learn the most difficult, yet most positive game winning technical skills, (dribbling and shooting), to the highest possible degree before moving into the team phase of the program.

Furthermore, the high self-concept developed by each player with great dribbling and finishing skill is amazing. By the time they are in their middle teens, players who have received a number of years of this type of technical training believe that they can have a significant positive impact each and every time they walk on the field. This positive self-image is perhaps the greatest benefit of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach!
Therefore when learning the “Training Soccer Legends” fakes, all players, on every possession, no matter what the circumstances, should perform a fake before passing until such time as a repertoire of deceptive dribbling moves has been mastered under extreme pressure. The reason that moves should be encouraged without defensive pressure, prior to a pass, during the earlier stages of learning, is that players should be trained to constantly imagine they are under the greatest pressure in or around the penalty area, no matter where they are on the field. This pretense of pressure and fantasy of proximity to the opponent's goal will, if encouraged in all areas of the field, result in players of every position acquiring the ability to wrong foot a defender and create space under pressure in the clutch when near the opponent's goal.

Admittedly, doing a move at full speed in space at one’s own defensive end of the field looks contrived, which it is. However, it is no more contrived than many of the beneficial exercises teachers ask their pupils to do in classroom situations to prepare them for life. The reason a move without defensive pressure in a game looks so ridiculous to the untrained eye is that it is being evaluated from the perspective of instant gratification instead of long-term development. However, when examined from the perspective of developing the ball wizard who is able to dominate defenders in an around the penalty area, it makes total sense. In this context, I ask each of my players, regardless of their position on the field, to imagine that they are the center striker receiving the ball in the opponent's box under pressure. I ask them to pretend that they have no obvious immediate passing or shooting option and they need to make an explosive fake to wrong-foot the defender and create six inches of space for the shot.

Perhaps the best reason for training players to do this, and for encouraging the risk mentality necessary for creative success, is that beating an opponent and scoring, while under extreme under pressure in the danger area, is the hardest skill of the game. Furthermore, deceptive dribbling and accurate, powerful, shooting develop tremendous speed and skill under pressure. This is the microcosm of the game that demands the greatest composure, deception, and the best-struck, most accurate release, therefore it results in the greatest transfer of technical and tactical training to penetrating passing, deceptive receiving and all other ground based areas of the game.

Once players are capable of creating space or beating an opponent intuitively, it is relatively easy to teach them when and where the pass or the move should be the primary option. However, unless a “second touch” move on every possession is made mandatory until they master the challenge, the players experience immense difficulty in planning the move they are going to use prior to receiving the ball and executing that move successfully under pressure.

This process of imagining you are under pressure close to goal is a combination of technical/tactical visualization of greater defensive pressure, combined with a realistic game situation. Normally visualization occurs when players are asked to mentally recreate game situations and solutions away from the playing environment. In contrast I ask them to combine visualization and performance by getting them to pretend they are in the most highly pressured situations when they are actually in low-pressure situations. The expectation and consequence is that they use a move to extricate themselves from imaginary defensive pressure. Using an easier game situation, combined with the fantasy of far greater pressure, familiarizes them with the
immense pressures they will encounter in and around the opponent's box but provides them with the essential intermediate step to infuse them with the technical capability and confidence necessary to eventually perform these skills under the greatest defensive pressure.

As a direct result of performing many contrived fakes and moves under very little pressure, in strange and unusual areas of the field, the inevitable result is a player who is far more capable of handling the physical and psychological pressure in and around the opponent's penalty area. This is where defensive pressure is extreme and a fast fake followed by an exquisite finish is needed.

To the uneducated it looks ridiculous. To coaches who want their players to excel at creating and finishing their own chances under the greatest defensive pressure, it is completely logical and rational.

**Important Quick Note:** If you use this methodology with your players you may be rewarded with derision from the more conventional lemmings in the greater coaching community. However, your players will be better equipped to handle the most difficult phases of the game and eventually play at a higher level, (after many more losses than traditional coaches can suffer to their oversized win-oriented egos). I spend many hours coaching, watching, analyzing and writing about soccer because it fascinates me as a vehicle for teaching positive self-concept and character. Suggesting that there is a right and wrong time to try a difficult move on the road to learning these skills will only serve to restrict development, tactical options and inevitably the acquisition of a maximally positive self-concept. Abandon the concept of a right and wrong time to attempt to be incredibly skillful, and you will do more for your players than you can imagine. Make the full transition to coaching them to take a player on each and every time they get the ball and you will eventually develop teams with individually brilliant players in every position. As a consequence, when the time is right you will be able to coach them to a level of team brilliance you have only dreamed about. It's a long hard road with many statistical defeats on the way. However, the upside is that the kids you coach will cease to roller coaster down emotionally with every defeat and up with every victory. They will judge each game by their acquisition of skill and personal improvement. They will learn to set their own individual developmental targets at a level that vastly surpasses those of players with traditionally coached teams and, as a direct result of your belief in developing them to the maximum of their individual potential, they will achieve greater things than you ever dreamed possible when you set out on this difficult path. Furthermore, the self-belief, self-determination and character benefits acquired in the “Training Soccer Legends” environment will carry over into life, ensuring that your players will fulfill their potential to be strong, healthy, independent leaders.
Chapter Twenty-Eight

The Success of Failure

DON'T QUIT!
When things go wrong, as they sometimes will.
When the road you're trudging seems all uphill.
When the funds are low and the debts are high.
And you want to smile, but you have to sigh.
When care is pressing you down a bit. Rest if you must,
But Don't You Quit!

Life is strange with its twists and turns.
As every one of us sometimes learns,
And many a fellow turns about.
When he might have won had he stuck it out.
Don't give up though the pace seems slow.
You may succeed with another blow.

Often the goal is nearer than,
It seems to a faint and faltering man.
Often the struggler has given up,
When he might have captured the victor's cup.
And he learned too late when the night came down,
How close he was to the golden crown.

Success is failure turned inside out,
The silver tint of the clouds of doubt,
And you never can tell how close you are.
It may be near when it seems afar.
So stick to the fight when you're hardest hit.
It's when things seem the worst,
That You Mustn't Quit!

William Murray Angus

The most innovative and creative people are those willing to undertake projects that will probably fail. Creativity depends heavily on exploration. When you're exploring new territory you often run into dead ends. When you have to turn back, when you do have the experience of failure, that's not a sign to abandon the endeavor. It's a signal that you're making progress. After all, you've learned what doesn't work. That will help you to eventually discover what works.
“The line between failure and success is so fine that we scarcely know when we pass it: so fine that we are often on the line and do not know it.”
Elbert Hubbard

The most successful people look at failure as simply another step in the process of success. Failure is not a reason to stop, quite the contrary. Indeed, each failure becomes a new and more advanced starting point.

“Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.”
Winston Churchill

An important part of the determination to succeed is the willingness to fail and the confidence to see every failure as temporary. So explore new ideas. Attempt new and ambitious projects. Of course you'll make mistakes. Sure, you'll run into some dead ends. And each time you do, you'll be moving forward toward ultimate, certain success.

“Failure doesn't mean you are a failure,
It does mean you haven't succeeded yet.

Failure doesn't mean you have accomplished nothing,
It does mean you have learned something.

Failure doesn't mean you have been a fool,
It does mean you had a lot of faith.

Failure doesn't mean you have been disgraced,
It does mean you were willing to try.

Failure doesn't mean you don't have it,
It does mean you have to do something in a different way.

Failure doesn't mean you are inferior,
It does mean you are not perfect.

Failure doesn't mean you've wasted your life,
It does mean you've a reason to start afresh.

Failure doesn't mean you should give up,
It does mean you should try harder.

Failure doesn't mean you'll never make it,
It does mean it will take a little longer.”

Robert Schuller
When coaching younger teams to perform the fakes and moves under pressure you will often lose games. If we look at the number of goals for and against, younger teams using this method will take a statistical beating. However, if we assess the amount of individual skill used, (moves and fakes), and the number of touches the players have, younger teams using this method will win the stat's game by a country mile. The “Training Soccer Legends” method is a WIN-WIN approach. Win-Win stands for “What’s Important Now is What Improvement Next”. The Legends difference is that we focus on the important win. This is the creative development of every child.

*Every noble work is at first impossible.*
*Thomas Carlyle*

The great coach will appreciate the importance of encouraging each player to keep trying the individual moves. The excellent coach will also encourage the children to take the risk of trying their fakes even in the most difficult circumstances, (tournament/league games and defensive penalty area), knowing that they will lose the game if they do. This is because it's the only way they will ever develop the confidence to do these things at the highest level. Only the players who have tried it enough and made enough mistakes, will eventually succeed against the best teams. The process of trying and failing but being encouraged to "go for it" again, will immunize them to the risks of losing the ball until they get good enough at the fakes and moves to enjoy the reinforcement from keeping the ball more often than losing it. For some of the players it may be a couple of years before this occurs but, as with all players that have been coached in this manner, it will definitely happen. It's a lot like learning to walk. We all fell over hundreds of times but our parents encouraged us to try again and eventually we succeeded. If you reinforce this philosophy and encourage your players to take the risk and try the moves, they will eventually succeed more often than not. Unfortunately, more impatient parents who can't put aside their need to win may have a tough time waiting until this occurs.

*When you get into a tight place and everything goes against you, till it seems as though you could not hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time that the tide will turn.*
*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

For those parents and coaches who have difficulty handling the emotional negatives that go hand in hand with high risk and statistical defeat, it is worthwhile to note that over 85% of graduating players from my club who were trained in this manner have gone on to play in College. These players all went through the same challenges of initially losing the ball when dribbling against good teams. As they gradually turned things around and mastered the moves, they learned how to possess the ball under pressure, even when playing at the very highest level.

As a means of highlighting the negative alternative I would like to point out that while the club was still young there were some players and parents who left the program at an early age to pursue the statistical win. From the players who left I can't recall any eventual college players who exited the club before learning to do the “Training Soccer Legends” moves under pressure.
RISKS
To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.
To reach out for another is to risk involvement
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.
To place your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss.
To love is to risk not being loved in return.
To live is to risk dying.
To hope is to risk despair.
To try is to risk failure.
But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.
The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing, and is nothing.
They may avoid suffering, and sorrow, but they cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.
Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves, they have forfeited their freedom.
Only a person who risks is free.
Author Unknown

WINNING IS NOT A POSITIVE END OF GAME STATISTIC. THE TRUE WIN IS
ACHIEVED BY MAXIMIZING THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL OF EACH AND EVERY
INDIVIDUAL. TO DO SO WITHOUT RISK IS IMPOSSIBLE!!
Chapter Twenty-Nine

The Problem With Traditional Youth Coaching

To use a dietary analogy, in much of modern day soccer we are being fed a menu of rice and potatoes. The fare is extremely bland. Where is the spice to tickle the taste buds? In the family kitchen you can fix the hunger problem quickly by cooking rice and potatoes because they are cheap, hard to mess up and fill a hole in the belly. However, rice and potatoes satisfy limited nutritional needs and without something to spice them up are very bland. So it is with soccer! Modern day coaches, fueled by the desire to win today, adopt the quick fix mentality towards achieving the extremely short-term win objective. They waste much of their precious training time doing such things as conditioning the athlete without a soccer ball. This type of training involves long, middle distance and short burst/reaction training. Many utilize circuit and weight training in the teenage years. There is no denying that this type of training has some carry over benefit into soccer, however, if we are to give any credence to the S.A.I.D. principle of physical education, (Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands), all of this valuable time needs to be replaced with constructive practice spent with a ball.

In simple terms this lack of ball work is normally a function of ignorance and fear. It is ignorance of the ways in which to develop soccer brilliance through a system of practice development designed to promote maximum technical skill, tactical speed, psychological growth and fitness simultaneously. It is also ignorance in the shape of selfish ego serving desire to get the statistical win rather than the ambition to develop each individual to the maximum of their potential. It is a function of fear because it takes a great deal of courage to ignore the critics, be an original thinker and back ones’ beliefs with action.

“If education is always to be conceived along the same antiquated lines of a mere transmission of knowledge, there is little to be hoped from it in the bettering of man’s future. For what is the use of transmitting knowledge if the individual’s total development lags behind?”

Maria Montessori

Nothing truly worthwhile is ever achieved without a great deal of hard work and sacrifice. There is no short cut to success because true success is directly proportionate to the amount of effort and application expended towards the furtherance of a goal. Success is not found in the destination but in the journey. Public recognition of that success may not occur until a specific goal has been reached but this does not mean that until that point in time you were a failure. Many smaller successes are achieved on the way to a goal. And each time you perform an action that brings the larger goal a little nearer, you become ever more successful. Public recognition and the statistical win are nice bonuses but they are only that, bonuses! True success is a function of growth and there is no short cut to lasting development and permanent learning.
“People often say that because I believe in attacking football my teams don’t know how to defend. That’s false, but even if it was true, I’d still send my teams out to attack. There is a saying in Brazil “football is like a short blanket, if you cover up your feet your head pops out, and if you cover up your head your feet pop out”, in other words, you can’t have it both ways. Concentrating on defending is the cowards way out.”

Jorge Valdano

Too many of today's coaches at every level are frightened away from teaching their players to play a creative, intelligent, individualistic game in the early stages of development because while a player is learning to perform the world’s most difficult skills, under pressure, in the game situation, he will inevitably make many errors and lose valuable possession. Often this will occur in the middle or defensive third and end up costing a goal. Consequently the game is lost and the universal truth, “people who never make a mistake never make anything”, is forgotten in the choking negative emotion that so often accompanies defeat. When this occurs blame is apportioned to the player who made the mistake. This is when that player learns the real truth. In the eyes of the coach his development is not really as important as winning the game. It is at this moment that many coaches target the offending player for criticism and forget the frustrations they felt during their playing days, when the same thing happened to them.

Are you one of these negative role models? If so think again and re-prioritize toward individual development instead of ego driven statistical team success.

“Every act of conscious learning requires the willingness to suffer an injury to one's self-esteem. That is why young children, before they are aware of their own self-importance, learn so easily; and why older persons, especially if vain or important, cannot learn at all.”

Thomas Szasz
Chapter Thirty

Teaching the Wrong Techniques, Tactics and Systems

As parents and coaches we all share impatience with our children. We want and expect them to be able to “do it now”. We want our teams to win now. We want our players to have great skills now. We want greater tactical understanding than other teams now. Yet it is often because of the over-emphasis on “wanting it now” that we pursue questionable tactical, strategic and systematical concepts and de-emphasize the development of tremendous creative technical skill. As a consequence players will not achieve their potential and learn the skills necessary to play at the highest level. The law of action/reaction dictates that any applied force results in an equal and opposite reaction. Similarly, any emphasis on one area of soccer has to take away from a player’s development in other areas. The traditional coach constantly changes the training to emphasize tactics over technique or strategy over tactics and/or systems over strategies. However, the “Training Soccer Legends” coach chooses the most beneficial practice content carefully and makes only small incremental changes from one practice to the next.

To most coaches there is a major conflict of choice among the following areas of the game:

- Positive offensive technique
- Positive defensive technique
- Negative technique
- Positive offensive tactics
- Positive defensive tactics
- Negative tactics
- Positive offensive strategies
- Positive defensive strategies
- Negative strategies
- Positive systems
- Negative systems

To clarify what each area of the game involves, I will provide a specific definition as follows:

1. An example of teaching positive offensive technique would be teaching a Maradona Turn or coaching players to volley.
2. An example of teaching positive defensive technique would be teaching the block tackle or defensive header.
3. An example of teaching negative technique would be coaching a dive in the penalty area.
4. An example of teaching positive offensive tactics would be coaching wall passes or overlaps.
5. An example of teaching positive defensive tactics would be showing when to jockey, delay, channel and cover.
6. An example of teaching negative tactics would be coaching players to kick the ball as far out of play as possible at every opportunity to waste time.
7. An example of teaching a positive offensive strategy would be coaching various offensive team pattern play options.
8. An example of teaching a positive defensive strategy would be coaching how to get 11 players behind the ball and play pressure/cover defense.
9. An example of teaching a negative defensive strategy would be to coach the team to foul and intimidate the opposition.
10. An example of a positive system would be one that significantly utilizes both the creative and destructive strengths of the individuals on the team. i.e. 4-2-4, 4-3-3 or 3-5-2.
11. An example of a negative system would be one that mostly utilizes the destructive strengths of the team. i.e. 5-4-1 or 4-5-1.

The myriad of alternatives is made all the more complicated because there are hundreds of different technical, tactical, strategic and systematical options and situations to choose from within the broader categories.

The great youth coach will narrow the focus to only those areas that provide each player with the greatest developmental benefit. If this narrowing of focus doesn’t occur the sheer depth and breadth of options the coach will have to cover, i.e. a different technical, tactical, strategic or systematical topic in every practice for the whole of the team’s youth existence, would result in little permanent learning and simply confuse the players.

We can now see why coaches are so fragmented. Soccer is so diverse and complicated that many coaches struggle to decide how to structure their program. There are more ways to coach than practice time available therefore, because they don’t know what to do, many coaches react to the greatest weakness exposed in the last game played and focus on correcting that in the next practice. Unfortunately this is perhaps the worst way of approaching the problem because it is reactionary. Each team played against will expose different weaknesses and the coach who reacts to every game with a new coaching topic will not spend enough time with each topic to achieve a permanent solution. This type of coach makes the mistake of pursuing an unplanned knee-jerk course of action instead of a long-term, logical, pre-planned, developmental curriculum.

The Legends approach is extremely simple to understand and yet tremendously beneficial for players. We focus primarily on coaching only two of the above listed technical, tactical, strategic and systematical areas i.e. those of positive offensive technique and positive offensive tactics as follows;

- First, we develop the most difficult and creative techniques, (dribbling and finishing), with the greatest transfer of training to three of the other four skills of the game (passing, receiving and tackling).
- Second we gradually increase the pressure on these skills until players can perform them at speed, under pressure in the clutch, (in and around the opposition penalty area).
• Third we teach and incorporate all the tactical combination, (passing), plays to break down the opposition’s defense.

This is a process that takes many years because of the gradual addition of new challenges and conditions to the general dribbling and shooting theme. In the “Training Soccer Legends” approach 11 v 11 strategy training occurs from the sideline in competitive games, not in practice. This is because practice time in a youth career is too limited to include strategic training, in addition to a full repertoire of creative technical and tactical training, without seriously neglecting the teaching of the myriad of creative technical and tactical ways to penetrate and score great goals.

**Important Quick Note:** The Legends method doesn’t waste valuable practice time training anything that the next coach the players play for might not use. Therefore, the Legends method doesn’t coach specific set plays, the offside trap, the flat back four or a myriad of other strategic topics that our players may never again be asked to use during their soccer career. As a result players trained in this method waste no developmental time on facets of the game they may never use again and, because they stay focused on the most creative ways to penetrate and score goals, maximize their impromptu creative technical and tactical abilities. Consequently they have a significantly greater creative technical and tactical repertoire than players trained in other systems. Players with a greater technical and tactical repertoire find it easier to improvize and adjust to any system demanded of them at a higher level. Therefore, we prepare and equip players who are far better able to adjust to the technical and tactical challenges in the “heat of the battle” at the highest levels of the game.
Chapter Thirty-One

Maturity and Duration of Skill Training

Until human growth ceases at physical maturity the body is constantly laying down new muscle and nerve tissue. This occurs either by cell division or increase in cell size. From the average onset of puberty at approximately 11.5 years girls add about 40% of their mature physical weight. From the average onset of puberty at approximately 12.5 years boys add about 50% of their mature physical weight.

Unfortunately for most players there is a prevailing philosophy among soccer coaches that premier soccer players should do most of their technical development before age 12, when they should switch into the tactical learning phases of the game. This clearly makes no sense because new muscle and nerve tissue has to be trained to perform the complicated technical skills inherent to the sport. Up till this point only 50% of the mature male body and 60% of the mature female body has been trained. To focus on tactics only or focus only on “top up” technique for what a player already knows will completely neglect the new untrained tissue that the body is laying down in and around the pre-trained nerve, muscle and bone cells. Furthermore, body tissue that has already been trained in the technical skills has to work harder to move the new tissue that has yet to be trained. This is why most players look clumsy during their growth spurt and, when compared to their pre-pubescent technical skill and speed performance, appear extremely awkward. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach teaches the most difficult deceptive dribbling and finishing skills in the game. These skills are soccer’s version of neuromuscular “rocket science”. Because of this they have to be practiced to a far greater degree than the simpler skills of passing and receiving.

At the onset of the growth spurt, (puberty), coaches and parents will recognize a noticeable slow down in technical skill performance. This occurs because the growing body is increasing its production of new cells and simultaneously experiencing rapid growth in existing cells. Consequently the athlete is trying to perform very complicated skills while carrying a significant amount of new, untrained nerve and muscle tissue. While this is occurring the skeleton is also growing rapidly so the problem is compounded by the need to move much heavier and bigger bones in order to perform each fake or strike the ball.

Because of the constant growth that occurs throughout childhood until physical maturity, it is essential that the most creative “Training Soccer Legends” skills are constantly worked upon and refined until cessation of physical growth occurs. This must happen if legendary expertise is to result. The budding athlete needs to stay ahead of the skill learning challenges provided by the growth of new muscle, nerve and bone tissue if creative brilliance is to be developed and maintained.
Players who neglect their deceptive dribbling and shooting skill training at any stage during the growth cycle will get rapidly clumsier than when they first ceased practicing. There are two reasons for this. First the “muscle memory” of trained body tissue will erode or diminish without practice. It is hypothesized that this loss of “muscle memory” occurs to a similar degree in both youth and adult cells that have been previously trained. However, the overall loss of total muscle memory occurs far more rapidly in children than in adults because young adults are maintaining their mature cell structure and size while children are constantly changing and developing new tissue through the processes of cell sub-division and growth. For this reason a trained child will lose the ability to perform previously learned skills far more rapidly than a trained adult.

The conclusions from the analysis of the growth process in children should be obvious. The serious athlete needs to work significantly harder on creative technique from ages 11 and 12 onwards than conventional coaching philosophies dictate. Because of its cerebral nature tactical learning can occur at any age. However, advanced technical learning capacity diminishes as the body’s tissues mature and, if the new tissue being laid down during growth is not trained while this is occurring, the athlete will not be able to train it to the same degree of expertise at a later stage.

“Growth is the process of responding positively to change. Grappling with hardships, trouble, and calamity; facing adversity in a spirit of determination and courage; loving and not being crushed by broken hopes; holding our head high, having done our best-this is growth.”

Author unknown
Chapter Thirty-Two

The Clutch Skills of Legends Soccer

The most valuable player on any team is the individual who is able to make the big play in the crucial area of the field when necessary. Maradona, Cruyff, Pele or Romario were clutch players for their national teams in past World Cup competition. Likewise, Moore, Gentile and Passarella were also clutch players of a different kind, i.e. great defenders.

In analysis, all these players shared one common characteristic. Most of their “clutch” plays occurred in and around the penalty area. These plays were most likely a great dribble or shot in the case of the first four and, in the case of the last three, a great defensive contribution.

The most difficult clutch skills are those that create goal-scoring opportunities. By their very nature these skills have to be the quickest, most incisive and deceptive in the game. The two techniques of the game in which exceptional creative ability is extremely rare are: (1) Shooting (finishing), and (2) Deceptive Dribbling. This is due to the nature of the challenges inherent within these skills and the high pressure involved in situations demanding their utilization.

**Shooting**

Goal scoring situations are subjected to pressures never experienced in any other area of the field as follows:

- Finishing is a skill performed in the area of the field crowded with the highest number of opponents focused entirely on denying the goal scoring opportunity.
- In this area the individual pressure and attention given to the striker by his marker is maximal.
- The constraints of the offside rule limits penetrating movement and space.
- The goalkeeper provides an obstacle and a unique skill set that limits the viable target area significantly.
- The need to apply power to the ball increases the potential for inaccuracy.
- The incredible importance of finishing carries an immense, inherent, psychological burden because the striker may have the one viable opportunity to win the game.

**Deceptive Dribbling**

Ball wizardry, in the guise of exceptional deceptive dribbling, brings with it many unique challenges:

- The recognized ball wizard is usually assigned to the most effective, (and often rugged), defender.
- The player carrying the ball receives the highest level of individual attention and pressure.
- The dribble is subjected to the greatest level of physical intimidation.
When dribbling to beat an opponent in the final third, the ball carrier may have to allow for limited space and covering defenders who are focused upon limiting penetrating options.

For all the above reasons, situations where dribbling or finishing are the appropriate tactical choices will demand an exceptional level of technical ability. The dribbler must have great balance, coordination, agility, strength and deception under pressure from opposition. If consistent success is to be expected a high level of confidence is also necessary. All this only occurs as a result of regular, intense practice.

The fact that both great dribbling and shooting are most commonly the hallmark of great players and great goals also helps identify them as the true “Clutch Skills” of soccer.
Chapter Thirty-Three

Explaining the Clutch Skills of Legends Soccer

The most difficult clutch skills of soccer involve setting up and scoring the goal. When analyzing the clutch skills of soccer we have to look at ways in which goals are created. Defensive errors, passing, dribbling, heading, shooting can all make a contribution to the goal scoring opportunity. The real question that the great soccer coach must answer is how can we develop players who can maximize their ability to make clutch plays by creating their own chances instead of relying on defensive errors.

As coaches we are largely unable to influence defensive errors so we must concentrate on the four ways to create and score goals:

- Heading
- Dribbling
- Shooting
- Passing

In the earlier years of development most work on heading is wasted because young kids simply don’t have the consistent ability to put the ball in the air with accuracy and, on the receiving end, do not feel comfortable putting their head in front of the ball. Therefore, we should leave the intense work on heading to later in the youth soccer experience. Consequently, until age 13 or 14, this leaves just shooting, dribbling and passing as the key teachable components in the development of the clutch player.

When analyzing shooting, dribbling and passing we can see that in every self created scoring, (clutch), play there is a successful shot. Therefore, it makes total sense to spend a significant portion of practice on finishing.

When shooting, players need to be able to shoot with power from distance, finish with accuracy from close in, swerve the ball around opponents and put the ball over opposing defenders and the goalkeeper. They must be taught to drive, bend, chip, volley and half-volley the ball with both accuracy and power. They also have to be taught to do this under the greatest pressure. It is therefore obvious that significant time needs to be spent on shooting in order to satisfy the ratio to which it influences the ability to make the big play.

If we take our analysis deeper and evaluate the relationship between shooting and passing we will realize that a pass is simply a much easier shot. A deadly finisher, who has been trained to quickly move into position to score the goal and to place the ball with accuracy and power in the only place where the goal is guaranteed, will definitely be a very accomplished passer. Therefore, we are training the very best passers and the very best finishers by focusing entirely
on the finishing techniques and tactics needed to take advantage of any opportunity that arises and the type of movement needed to get open in the penalty area.

It should now become apparent that by focusing 50% of our total available time on the more difficult skill of finishing under pressure we also develop the very best passers. This is why we don’t waste practice time on passing drills.

Moving on, the only other clutch skill that we really need to work on intensively to make the young player into a devastating attacking playmaker is dribbling. To maximize the creative dribbling capabilities of each player the remainder of a coach’s time, (after finishing), needs to be spent on deceptive dribbling to beat defenders at close quarters in and around the penalty area.

In this way we accomplish tremendous learning of the 3 key clutch skills, i.e. shooting, passing and dribbling. These are the crucial big play skills for the younger player and must be developed in the most highly pressured area of the field so that children are conditioned with a desire to make the big play as if this were a most normal occurrence.

**Important Quick Note:** The self-concept and confidence this intense focus develops in the young dribbler and goal scorer is a joy to behold. This should surprise no one because players who have the ability to make the plays that can win the game for their team will automatically become highly motivated team members and eventually leaders. It must also be emphasized that this approach also benefits the defensive clutch skills because all the live situations that are used to develop great dribbling, passing and finishing skills provide maximal learning of big play defensive abilities. As a final result and bonus this unique coaching approach not only develops the brilliant attacking player but also the quick, aggressive, accomplished clutch defender.
Chapter Thirty-Four

Fast Footwork Versus Legends Fakes and Moves

The question is not whether fast footwork training is useful. The key issue so that no time is wasted is whether training fast footwork is more useful than learning the Legends fakes and moves. The game of soccer is so diverse that there are thousands of movement patterns that can be practiced. Training throw-ins is “useful”. Working on set plays is “useful”. Working on fast footwork is far more “useful”. However, a soccer career is so short that there is no time to waste. Therefore, it is our responsibility to identify what is most “useful” and wisely spend our training time on developing the components of the game that most benefit each player.

Fast footwork is an excellent speed of reaction, agility and coordination training approach. It trains the ability to eventually dominate the ball without looking at it. However, when the ability to beat a defender is the objective there are more productive ways to achieve this goal that simultaneously train the feet to move faster.

Justifications for this claim are as follows:

- Firstly, fast footwork goes nowhere. Great dribbling training will always have an objective. The objective of dribbling is to beat a player and to create maximum space for the next technical action. Fast footwork achieves neither of these two objectives. I recall George Vizvary – U.S.S.F. National Staff Coach, stopping a coaching session one time to harangue the dribbler. George’s comment was “Your dribbling is like peeing in a wet suit. It gives you a nice warm feeling but doesn’t go anywhere!” That is what fast footwork does for the player. It makes him look good but doesn’t beat a defender or create as much space for the pass as a well-chosen fake and subsequent explosion.

- Secondly, working on fast footwork takes valuable time away from more viable training. There is a massive repertoire of soccer skills and the situations they can be used in. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the great coach to select both the technical skills and the training situations designed to develop those skills, with great attention to the transfer of both the skills and the conditioned practices to the real game. The great coach will practice only those skills that transfer maximally to the other skills and situations of soccer.

The “Training Soccer Legends” dribbling and finishing based approach to coaching soccer simultaneously develops all the technical field skills, (shooting, passing, dribbling, receiving, tackling), during the early phases except for heading. This cross training benefit make dribbling and finishing the key skills of soccer because the neuromuscular learning carries over, (transfers), into passing, receiving and tackling. We are convinced that this carry over or transfer of training occurs. Therefore, we recognize that training the fakes and moves simultaneously develops fast footwork because all fast footwork components are inherent within the Legends
reertoire of fakes and moves. Because of this it makes no sense to train fast footwork in isolation. Consequently, if a coach is to take a player to the maximum of his or her potential, fast footwork training should be eliminated and replaced by a “two for the price of one” focus on refining the “Training Soccer Legends” fakes and moves.

Using a fake under pressure is an immense psychological challenge. Even with years of work on a limited number of fakes it is extremely difficult for the player to accept the responsibility to reproduce the instantaneous, deceptive, explosive neuromuscular pattern needed to dominate an opponent in the one on one situation. Wasting a significant portion of training time on fast footwork when there is a far more beneficial alternative will limit the player’s ability to perform the fakes at every level of the game, especially the very highest.

**Important Quick Note:** Ultimately it comes down to this; by training a limited number of the most difficult yet devastating fakes and moves to beat a player or create space under any type of defensive pressure the great coach will maximize potential and the ability to reach the higher levels of the game. By splitting focus and using valuable training time to groove less beneficial skills, the coach will unwittingly create both psychological and physiological limits on the ability of his players to successfully use those fakes in the very biggest games where the College, Professional or National coaches are watching. It is well known that coaches at this level are always looking for players who can win games. The great youth coach must use every moment available to develop the type of player who can impress these coaches and eventually excel in College, Professional and National team environments.
Chapter Thirty-Five

The Compounding Theory of Legends Skill Development

**Individual Compounding:** One of the most resounding justifications for a dribbling approach to coaching soccer is provided through analysis of the subsequent behavior of supremely confident dribblers in pick up or scrimmage situations. If duration of time in possession of the ball is selected as the criteria for statistical assessment, these individuals are the dominant players. Therefore, dribbling development compounds because a greater percentage of each and every soccer situation involving one ball and a number of participants will be enjoyed by those players with more refined dribbling abilities. In more basic terminology the same player who, prior to an intensive course of dribbling, enjoyed 25% of total time on the ball in a four-person scrimmage will most definitely enjoy a greater percentage of possession after learning to dribble the Legends way. This extra time on the ball pays greater dividends in skill acquisition and compounds into an even greater percentage of possession. The benefits of this all too logical observation do not end here because, just as one year’s investment interest will compound itself in following years, this type of skill development compounds itself in any subsequent group activity with a soccer ball.

No other of soccer’s skills has this compounding effect because they are all reception or release based. Therefore, the incidence of their occurrence is, to a large degree dictated, by both opponents and teammates.

**Small Group Compounding:** An additional compounding affect occurs in any situation where a few players trained to be very creative, self-confident dribblers play together. Players trained together to dominate the ball deceptively will enjoy more cumulative possession in small-sided environments. This is because they are more skillful and able to hold individual possession until ready to take a shot or make a pass to a teammate. Because they don’t have the ability to overcome defensive pressure less skillful players force passes and lose possession. Even a small extra percentage of ball possession in small group situations will compound itself and guarantee even greater skill acquisition later on.

Examples of small group situations where players trained creatively from the same team could play together are 3 v 3 tournaments, pick up games, school recess, high school and state select practices. Therefore, because of the small-group compounding factor, the “Training Soccer Legends” coaching approach provides a significant benefit even when playing or training in other soccer environments.

**Team Compounding:** The logical progression is where a whole Legends team enjoys a significantly greater percentage of individual and cumulative time in possession than a team encouraged to pass quickly or play long-ball. Any player on a team with a whole squad of
players trained to hold the ball with deception under pressure until the time is right for a pass or shot, will enjoy more ball possession and far greater development.

**Important Quick Note:** Time on the ball is the vital component in determining the eventual level of play of the individual. This is because players being evaluated for the next level of play are judged mostly by what they are able to achieve with the ball. Soccer coaches do not have the objective statistical evaluation tools available to the American Football coach. At try-outs or showcases the evaluation of players is largely subjective. If when necessary one player can hold the ball longer than another, create a penetrating passing or shooting option and pick the right time to pass, she stands a much better chance of being selected to the higher standard of play.

This quality of composure on the ball and the ability to be the “engine” of penetration for one’s team has traditionally been the hallmark of the great player. With the “Training Soccer Legends” approach a far higher level of this type of skill acquisition is guaranteed.
Chapter Thirty-Six

The Legends “Zone of Altered Consciousness”

When players are young it is vital that the coaching philosophy is explained to their parents. You will be met with a great degree of skepticism when you tell them you are going to concentrate on only the most difficult individual skills and that the kids will be encouraged to dribble with a high degree of risk to extricate themselves from tight situations.

Furthermore, you must be prepared for some criticism of the non-conventional and unique individual statistical methods of evaluating performance contained in these pages. For example, some parents and many other coaches will be cynical of statistical evaluations for shooting, 1v1, 2v2 and game performance. When you impose the condition that each player is allowed a maximum of one “clean up” touch before executing a shot, pass or fake, your expertise will most surely be questioned. However, combine all the above with an insistence upon tiny practice spaces and all players involved simultaneously going to two full size goals and your sanity will, most definitely, be brought into question.

In the NBA there exists an ability experienced by just a few of the league's superstars. This ability is described as "Being able to slow motion the analysis of action under the basket while executing skills at full pace". This has been christened, “The Zone of Altered Consciousness" or simply “The Zone”. Study has shown that many individuals are born with the genetic capability of achieving greatness in a specific environment. However, the potential of a person cannot be maximized without the right combination of a multitude of circumstances. Most of the members of USA basketball's Spanish Olympic "Dream Team" had two things in common:

They were introduced to the game of basketball at a very young age.
They all played many hours of 1 v 1, 2 v 2, and 3 v 3 from an early age and continued to do so throughout their whole career.

Structuring Practices To Develop “Legends Zone” Ability

Most of the "Dream Team" attribute their success to the many hours of dog-eat-dog battles underneath the basket at the local gym or playground. This led me to evaluate the circumstances that provided them with their extraordinary abilities. As result of this evaluation I have identified the following list of circumstances as the major contributing factors in their success:

- Small target (The hoop)
- Small practice area (The key)
- High degree of individual responsibility (Both offensive and defensive)
- Very little wasted time (No chasing the basketball due to small game, gym walls or playground fences)
- High emphasis on dribbling skills and dribbling deception at speed due to small number of participants on each team (1, 2 or 3)
High emphasis on shooting skills due to constant proximity to goal.

Very crowded practice area (Most action occurs under the basket)

Lots of playing time. Games would last hours and the best players would stay the longest.

Keeping score (meaningful statistical goals)

As a consequence of the above evaluation it can be logically hypothesized that effective dribbling and shooting soccer practices should involve the following:

- Regulation size goals broken down into small target areas, i.e. only shots that hit the inside side netting first, count as a goal
- Goals 20-25 yards apart (The vicinity of the penalty area)
- High degree of individual responsibility (Individual offensive and defensive match ups)
- Very little wasted time. All areas behind and to the side of the goal are live. The ball never goes out of play
- High emphasis on dribbling skills due to small number of players on each team (1 or 2)
- High emphasis on shooting skills due to constant proximity to goal
- Crowded practice area. All players play simultaneously. All action occurs around the goal
- Lots of playing time. Practice should be extended to the maximum reasonable length
- Keeping Score (Keep meaningful statistics designed to promote the “individual win”)

After reviewing the Zone of Altered Consciousness, the two crucial capabilities for entry into the “Zone” can be identified as:

- The ability to think ahead at speed
- Exceptional technical ability in the high-risk creative skills.

It is apparent that when relating this “New Knowledge” to soccer great coaches must create a set of practice circumstances that force the players to employ instantaneous forethought and aggressive creativity. The environment and parameters listed above will force players to play with the technical skill, quickness and vision necessary to enter “The Legends Zone”. Eventually this ability will require no effort. It becomes an instinct or reaction. Once many years of positive habits have been developed conscious thought only impedes effective performance.

“Consciousness is a phase of mental life which arises in connection with the formation of new habits. When habit is formed, consciousness only interferes to spoil our performance.”
W. R. Inge

**Important Quick Note:** Many young players have the genetic capability to experience “The Legends Zone”. The great players of the last three decades have all had the ability to combine exceptional technical skill, tactical awareness and speed in highly pressured situations. Practicing in restricted space and crowded circumstances will maximize the chances of players entering "The Legends Zone" and reveal many more ways in which to dominate an opponent and develop the high self concept that is so essential for a happy and successful soccer career.
Chapter Thirty-Seven

The 3 Principles of Skill and the “Legends Zone”

Three extensively researched and documented principles are continuously emphasized in Physical Education training. These are:

1. The S.A.I.D. Principle (Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands)
2. The Economy of Training Principle
3. The Transfer of Training Principle

S.A.I.D. Principle
The basic premise of the S.A.I.D. principle is that an athlete will adjust to the precise responses expected and requested of him. Therefore the primary challenges of coaching are to:

- Set up an environment that elicits the desired response.
- Emphasize and challenge those technical and tactical alternatives that will afford the greatest level of success and accomplishment.
- Place the body into ever changing situations so that it can grow and develop.

Economy of Training
The essential characteristics of "Economy of Training" are effectively utilizing time, space and training aids to maximize effective learning time.

Transfer of Training
This principle establishes that all task specific assimilation, evaluative and neuromuscular development transfers into greater efficiency of related skill performance.

Utilizing the S.A.I.D. Principle With a Small Practice Area Smaller Than the Outdoor Penalty Area
In soccer a small practice area provides the very best available environment for utilizing the S.A.I.D. principle of physical education. The objective of great coaching should be to create players who are devastating in front of goal (offensively and defensively). Therefore, the practice field must be short enough that players can score anytime they have possession and have to defend intensely when they don’t. The area must also be extremely crowded so that the ball carrier has to absorb the maximum possible information, process that information and select the
most appropriate option within the parameters of his ability. All this must be accomplished in a split second and the area utilized must have the appropriate size of goal at each end to ensure comparative realism and build confidence when shooting.

Over time it has become evident that only by putting players under constant pressure to make quick creative tactical decisions will they maximize this ability. The smaller practice field demands that they think ahead at speed. Additionally, restricted space and time forces players to utilize exceptional technical skill because, in such a tight and crowded environment, only the quick thinking deceptive player will enjoy success.

Thus, the "Imposed Demands" are "Specific" to the goal of developing quick thinking, aggressive and creative players who have been forced to "Adapt" to and overcome the challenges provided by a restricted practice field environment and conditions more difficult to those encountered in the match day penalty area where the “Big Play” is necessary.

**Utilizing The Economy Of Training Principle With A Small Practice Area That Resembles The Outdoor Penalty Area**

Here the goal is to waste as little time as possible so that each player enjoys maximum developmental benefits. Practicing in a small space is to soccer what racquetball is to tennis. In tennis players of all ages and abilities spend a significant amount of time retrieving errant balls and the flight time of each stroke is significantly greater than for racquetball. In racquetball the ball never gets very far away no matter how bad you are. On a small soccer practice field space is more restricted, therefore less time is wasted chasing miscued shots and passes. This gives players more time on the ball resulting in much faster technical growth than in programs using larger practice areas and lower practice numbers with more time and space.

Additionally, a small training field promotes a combination of tremendous tactical and technical speed. Just as the professional table tennis player has better reactions than his counterpart in tennis, the soccer player used to tight spaces has a quicker mind, faster reactions and is generally more skillful, than his counterpart who has been trained with more space and less pressure.

In table tennis the table, bat and ball bear little resemblance to the implements used in tennis. In both small and full field soccer all the key components of both games are the same. These key components include ball, goals and opponents. However, the most productive “economy of training” adjustment that a coach can make is in making the total practice area no greater than the final fifth of the full field, i.e. 20-25 yards from goal to goal. This makes the size of the small field practice area a little deeper than the big field penalty area. The consequence of playing in the appropriate size but crowded penalty area environment at every practice is that all Legends players are constantly challenged to overcome greater than normal game type pressure from opposition. Because this challenge occurs in the area of the field where all big offensive and defensive plays are made, the creative learning factor increases significantly. Consequently, the smaller, crowded practice environment provides the most beneficial training circumstances to develop the player who excels in the outdoor penalty area or "Clutch" situation.
Utilizing The Transfer Of Training Principle In Restricted Spaces

The smaller practice field puts great pressure on a player to make quick, composed, shooting, dribbling, passing and receiving decisions. The technical performance of these skills has to be nearly perfect to be successful at the highest level. Because the pressure in a reduced size crowded practice area is far greater than that of the outdoor penalty area the "Transfer of Training" benefits from the practice environment to the real game are maximized.

When a player has been trained in practice to do the most difficult skills at the greatest speed, transferring this ability to the real game becomes relatively easy. When the coach continually focuses on and demands the most difficult techniques, all other techniques become relatively easy to perform. Therefore, if a player has been trained to overcome greater technical and tactical practice challenges than those encountered offensively and defensively in the outdoor penalty area during a game, he will be more likely to enjoy subsequent game success in that part of the field and is guaranteed to be effective between the penalty areas where the physical and psychological pressure is reduced.

This is because positive transfer of training from the most difficult skills in the tightest areas, to the full game, is maximal. While transfer of training from the easier skills with expanded space and time, to the restricted spaces of the penalty area, is minimal.
Chapter Thirty-Eight

Clever Ways to Give Players More Advantages

Using a smaller ball in practice
When researching the development of the great players there is a common thread that should not be ignored. This commonality in background is the degree to which these men used a small ball during their younger years. George Best used a tennis ball to practice with while Pele and Maradona both used a small ball of bound rags. A smaller less cooperative ball provides a greater degree of dribbling difficulty, therefore players have to develop better touch and control. The common theme of this book revolves around getting the most development out of the same time available to all coaches. If in the same amount of time a better touch can be developed simply by swapping a size 5 for a size 4 ball it makes logical sense to do so. To overcome the difficulties presented by using smaller balls players have to develop better skills, touch and balance. After playing with a smaller more difficult ball the players find the real game with a bigger ball relatively easy.

Practicing players on a hard and lively surface
It is no coincidence that the world’s most skillful players have come from economically challenged environments where much of their early practice was on hard, lively surfaces. Pele and Maradona grew up in hot and dry areas where their practice areas were invariably hard and very dry and George Best learned his skills with a tennis ball on the streets of working class Belfast. As anyone who has tried to dribble a soccer ball on a parking lot will attest, it takes a much softer and defter touch to keep the ball close on a hard surface than on grass. Receiving the ball is also more difficult because the surface does little to slow it down. For the combined reasons that the ball will arrive, depart and generally move at a greater speed, training on a faster surface will develop a better touch and greater speed of play. This in turn leads to development of quicker, more skilful players who have learned to adapt to the situational demands.

At the famous Tahuichi Academy in Bolivia the coaching staff train the players on a hard and fast surface. It is their theory that, if a player can develop the touch and balance to play good soccer on a faster surface, that player will have no problem playing a much better game on a slower grass surface. Conversely, players used to practicing on extremely good fields will have a much tougher time adjusting both mentally and physically when they have to play games on a poor surface. Just the fact that the surface is not as high quality as their practice field may be enough to destroy their self-confidence and result in poor individual and team performance. Therefore, a multiple benefit is gained by practicing on faster training surfaces.

- First, the players develop a better touch and reaction to faster passes, shots and general play.
• Second, they learn to deal with some bad bounces because they know that they cannot rely on the surface to provide them with consistent results.

• Third, the players are never intimidated by a poor game surface because they face that situation every day in practice. Consequently, they have great confidence that they can overcome field conditions that would affect most teams adversely.

• Fourth, when players who are used to a poor practice surface play on excellent fields, their self-confidence and willingness to attempt the “big play” rises to a much higher level. This is because they know that the bad bounces and the faster speed of play they have learned to overcome in practice will not occur on a smooth grass surface.

**Inflating practice balls to maximum pressure**

During the days when the youth teams from the Bolivian Tahuichi Academy were world famous, the practice balls were inflated to the point where they were at their hardest and liveliest. The demands upon players are much greater when the balls are maximally inflated and more likely to expose an elephantine touch. The unforgiving nature of these highly inflated balls makes players better because they know that if their touch isn’t soft and silky smooth they will lose possession. It has often been said of a poorer player that, “his second touch is a tackle”. Working with an over-inflated ball goes a long way towards guaranteeing that the first touch will put players in an advantageous possession position rather than one that necessitates having to win the ball back.

**Structuring the environment to facilitate the above**

Each player will need to play and practice with the smallest ball available. It would be impractical to practice with tennis balls on a grass surface but size 3 or 4 balls would suffice. Secondly, evaluate where you can hold practices and choose a practice venue for its firmness and speed of surface. Always make sure that the roll of the ball will allow for reasonable success and safety but choose a surface that will approximate the hardest, driest and fastest of all the fields you will ever play on. Thirdly, inflate the balls to the point where they are at their most lively and bounciest.

**Important Quick Note:** It is important that the surface chosen is reasonably smooth because the Legends dribbling and ball striking skills are very difficult neuromuscular movement patterns. Difficult actions such as dribbling fakes and moves will only be learned and reproduced to the maximum degree when players are confident that the ball isn’t going to hop up and hit their shins as they attempt to dribble or shoot.
Chapter Thirty-Nine

Training Legendary Goalkeepers

As with field player instruction the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy has a unique approach to training goalkeepers. This is an area of the game where team coaches have traditionally done a particularly poor job of preparing players. Most team coaches integrate their goalkeeper training with their team training. Unfortunately because traditional team training focuses so heavily on passing there is little opportunity for the goalkeeper to be integrated in any type of meaningful developmental activity applicable to the goalie position.

As a consequence goalies in many clubs have to pay team and club dues plus additional money for specific goalkeeper training with specialist keeper coaches. Unfortunately this specialist coach rarely has the field players on hand to create a realistic and meaningful goalkeeper training environment. Therefore, the keeper bounces between a team environment that is specifically designed to develop field player, and an individual training environment that doesn’t involve field players and consequently cannot challenge the keeper in the specific way that the most intense real game situations will.

Earlier in the book we discussed how applying the principles of physical education instruction, i.e. specificity, economy and transfer of training, will maximize field player development. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach uses these three essential components to develop goalkeepers to their maximum potential.

Specificity of Training Applied to Goalkeeping

As with the training of a Legendary field player the keeper training environment has to be specific to the areas of greatest game challenge and pressure. Consequently all live keeper situations in Legends practices involve two full squads of players, broken down into 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 mini games, all dribbling, passing and shooting within 25 yards of goal. A vital component of the Legends philosophy is that players who have been taught and constantly challenged to create space and score goals in the crowded penalty area, can easily overcome the simpler challenges posed in other less pressured areas of the field. Consequently, all practice after the technical training phase of the field player program, involves live situations within 25 yards of goal with many balls in play at the same time. This extreme focus on the final phase, or goal scoring aspect of the game, is incredibly specific and beneficial to goalkeepers who face realistic game type pressure every second of every minute in Legends practices.

The more specific the training environment is to the key areas and challenges inherent within the game, the greater the positive learning. The components of a Legends training session are maximally specific and realistic, plus relentlessly repetitive and challenging to goalkeepers. This is because the Legends philosophy involves 20-30 players all simultaneously attempting to penetrate and score. As a consequence, the Legends trained keeper faces hundreds of very
realistic, live attacking situations and a barrage of 1 v 1, 2 v 2 situations and shots from all angles and distances within 25 yards, in every practice. The tremendous relativity of this environment challenges the keeper to the greatest possible degree and maximizes the developmental benefits enjoyed by any goalkeeper who train in this manner.

**Economy of Training Applied to Goalkeeping**

Economy of training is the second of the three essential physical education principles. To maximize the benefits of economy of training for goalies the great coach will structure the practice environment and training session content so that the keeper enjoys the greatest possible skill acquisition benefit. The Training Soccer Legends philosophy dovetails beautifully with economy of training principles because the environment created by positioning two age appropriate goals approximately 25 yards apart, creates a field of optimal size for challenging and developing the three key areas of goalkeeping, i.e. diving saves, reaction saves and 1 v 1 saves. Furthermore, the dribbling and finishing content of all practices involved in stage 2 and the additional passing and first time finishing component in stage 3 of the Legends field player curriculum, creates the perfect environment, and provides the very best practice content, for testing and further developing a goalkeeper’s abilities. The emphasis on relentless attack involved in this type of training creates an almost perfect pressure-training environment for goalkeepers. The most effective pressure training is where the goalie is forced to make a realistic “big play” save, distribute the ball quickly and immediately make another “big play” save. In the Legends philosophy the benefits of pressure training are maximized because the practices are structured to guarantee maximum repetition of the “big play save – distribution – big play save” sequence. Because the practice environment and content demands constant repetition of the “big play” from both the field players and goalies all parties enjoy an optimal level of pressure and individual development. This is how the Legends philosophy utilizes the economy of training principle to get the best out of every player at every practice.

**Transfer of Training Applied To Legends Goalkeeping**

The Physical Education transfer of training principle establishes that all task specific assimilation, evaluative and neuromuscular development transfers into greater efficiency of related skill performance. When a keeper has been trained to perform the most difficult saves under the greatest pressure, all other similar but less difficult techniques, become relatively easy to perform. Therefore, if a keeper is constantly trained to overcome greater challenges than those encountered during games, she will be more likely to enjoy subsequent success in making the harder saves and find the simpler saves, that are an essential part of the goalkeeper’s repertoire, very easy to make. For example; where the keeper has developed great proficiency in making the extended diving catch to save a shot destined for the top corner of the net, she is guaranteed to be more effective when dealing with the easier skill of timing and catching crosses when the physical and psychological pressure is reduced. Likewise, any keeper with the ability to quickly read the 1 v 1 and the courage to attack and win the ball at the feet of the onrushing attacker, will have little problem reading and successfully dealing with the driven cross. Added to which, any keeper who can consistently make the reaction save against driven shots from attackers close to goal will have little difficulty dealing with shots taken from further out. This is because positive
transfer of training is maximal from the most difficult skills in the tightest areas, to easier skills in expanded space and time, but minimal from the easier skills with expanded space and time, to the restricted spaces in the penalty area involved with the “Training Soccer Legends” 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 philosophy.

Unfortunately for most goalies traditional goalkeeper training programs set up artificial situations where the keeper has an unrealistic amount of time to prepare for making the save, as opposed to realistic situations that emulate the conditions found in the crowded penalty area on match day. Because traditional keeper training contains little real game like pressure, it should be no surprise when a keeper with great technique and effectiveness in the artificial and unrealistic practice environment, can’t make an easier save in the competitive cauldron of the real game.

When recruiting goalkeepers enlightened college coaches look for supreme ability to do three things very well:

- The diving save
- The reaction save
- The 1 v 1 breakaway save

These are the three most difficult skills in the goalkeeping lexicon and the three skills that separate the great from the average keeper.

College coaches also look for goalkeepers with good foot-skills who can handle a poor back pass efficiently and clear the danger. The Legends program is famous for developing incredible foot skills and has always focused on a supreme level of diving, reaction and 1 v 1 ability under pressure. This is done in way that most other programs can’t begin to conceptualize.

- First, in our weekly goalkeeping specific practices we put our primary focus on teaching great technique and tactical understanding of diving, reaction and 1 v 1 breakaway saves.

- Second, in our team practices the goalkeeper faces hundreds of shots and breakaways. We place two training field goals just 20-25 yards apart for all practices. All field players play 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 at the same time, therefore many shots are taken in very quick succession and, all practice long in very quick succession, the goalie has to make hundreds of diving, reaction and 1 v 1 saves. The situation is totally dynamic and realistic at all times. This means that each practice contains hundreds of attacking plays that are very specific to the greatest pressure a goalie will ever encounter in the 11 v 11 game situation. When the “Training Soccer Legends” situation is compared to the live game it can be seen that at no time in a typical match does the pressure on the goalkeeper exceed that found in the Legends training situation. Over the days, months and years our goalies get used to foiling all variations of crucial attacking plays in the box. As a consequence, the appropriate responses become habitual and our keepers become brilliant at making the three most difficult saves in soccer, i.e. diving, 1 v 1 & reaction.
• Third, during games in the initial phases of our program, Legends field players are instructed to take incredible dribbling risks in all areas of the field. This leads to many lost possessions in the defensive third. The result of this high turnover ratio is an unusual amount of action for the goalie, who has to make more saves in this high risk approach to the game than in a traditional “take no risk” defensive approach.

• Fourth, goalkeepers trained in this manner have to make many quick tactical decisions due to the number of balls in play. In an average 1 v 1 practice session each goalie has to be aware of the position and relative danger of 10-15 soccer balls. This develops tremendous ability to assess variables, compute those variables and select which ball or situation presents the most danger. The goalie has to quickly and constantly adjust position and focus to deal with the greatest threat. This constant adjustment and assessment of new angles etc, develops the ability of the keeper in the “Training Soccer Legends” system to track multiple threats. The keeper also learns to deal with these threats in a constantly shifting priority order of most-to-least dangerous.

**Important Quick Note:** Most programs focus on the field players and neglect the goalkeeper. The Legends program is the only one that consistently challenges the goalkeeper to perform at levels of pressure many times greater than in the game situation, as an integral component of practice. With the best diving, reaction, 1 v 1 ability and foot skills, our keepers stand out from the host of other goalkeepers whose skills in these crucial areas have not been honed by years of specific focus on making the big saves and plays that win games.
Chapter Forty

Making Legends Style Creative Play Intuitive

We have all seen the field player who can take a player on in practice with success but fails miserably in games. This player hasn’t made his play intuitive. We have also seen the goalkeeper who seems masterful in practice but makes mistakes under pressure on match day. This keeper has also failed to make the skills and tactics of the position intuitive. Good coaching necessitates that skills and tactics are transferable from practice to games. For this to happen they need to be intuitive. Many coaches teach the correct passing techniques but due to poor practice content choice, their teams struggle to reproduce these skills in games. Furthermore, the better the competition the worse their players play. This is because the coach failed to make their play instinctive.

To make full use of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach the coach will first need to believe that intuitions and instincts are facts and that these qualities can be trained or honed by appropriate exercises. Nature/nurture debates go back to the dawn of time. The truth is that every individual has a tremendous amount of undeveloped potential and intuition, while hard to rationalize, is a proven individual human quality that has tremendous potential for improvement.

The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is not only unique because it focuses on the most difficult creative skills, i.e. deceptive dribbling and shooting. It is also unique because it makes these skills intuitive and instinctive in a manner totally alien to the traditional soccer coaching community.

“Don’t think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity. It’s self-conscious, and anything self-conscious is lousy. You can’t try to do things. You simply must do things.”
Ray Bradbury

At the highest levels of the game there is no time to think. This harsh reality is the major reason why many technically gifted players do not make it to the higher levels of play. This problem is compounded because the highest levels of soccer involve a minimum of pre-planned plays and a vital need to decide the appropriate course of action, “on the fly”, before receiving the ball. This is the reason why poor dribblers are so often criticized. A poor dribbler takes a player on when there’s a great opportunity for a penetrating pass. Worse still, a poor dribbler holds the ball when there’s a great scoring opportunity. A poor dribbler is one who has yet to learn the extrasensory perception and tactical insight to make good decisions intuitively.

In the Legends program there is a logical progression through which every great deceptive dribbler has to pass:
• When first learning to dribble deceptively the player uses no forethought, keeps his head down throughout the fake and has no concept of what he’s going to do with the ball upon exiting the move.
• As he gets better he lifts his head up and starts to assess exterior variables during the action.
• With further practice he learns to visualize the appropriate deceptive dribbling action before acquiring the ball and keeps his head up throughout the move.
• Eventually he can perform all the above steps with an exit strategy in mind.

This means that he has developed the ability to enter the dribbling sequence with all components consciously selected as a means to an end. After further practice he is able to put prior and ongoing assessment of variables and options, correct option selection, appropriate technical performance and perfect exit strategy together to dominate the 1 v 1 encounter.

Usually it takes years to develop a player to this point of excellence. Often this is as far as a gifted dribbler goes because the coach provides no mechanism for integrating tremendous dribbling skills successfully into the “team of brilliance” concept. History is littered with the tormented souls of brilliant individuals who were unable to play the team game of life and integrate their unique gifts into society in an acceptable and beneficial manner. So it is with soccer. And it has given the deceptive dribbler a bad name, “Ball Hog”.

The dictionary defines “Intuition” as: “The capacity of knowing without the use of rational processes”.

The thesaurus lists these words as alternative ways to describe intuition: “Insight, perceptivity, instinct, presentiment, clairvoyance, sixth sense, extrasensory perception, second sight”.

Intuition, plus incredible technical skill, are the key characteristics of team sport superstars.

When developing intuitive ball wizards and dynamic supporting attackers it makes no sense to practice in numbers greater than 2 v 2. This is because each time two more players are added to a small-sided game there is a massive decrease in the percentage of first attacker ball touches and crucial second attacker support situations. For example, playing 3 v 3 instead of 2 v 2 causes a 50% decrease in first attacker challenges and second attacker involvement. Playing 4 v 4 instead of 2 v 2 decreases viable first and second attacker learning opportunities by 100%. From these simple mathematical calculations it can be seen that playing 2 v 2 offers logical statistical advantages that are significantly more beneficial to key attackers and defenders.

As discussed earlier in my book, practicing two teams together and playing multiple games of 2 v 2, on the same small field simultaneously, creates a need to think and react at far greater speeds than situations involving greater space and lower numbers of players.
Gradually adding operant, (Pavlovian), conditions necessitates that more actions have to be instinctive, thereby creating an individual and team ability to play faster and more creatively than opponents, (team of brilliance).

A Description of Pavlovian Operant Conditioning

All animals, including humans, are born with a limited set of reflexes. These are genetically wired-in responses to specific environmental stimuli. A reflex is a relationship between a specific environmental event and a fixed behavioral action that it evokes. Reflexes have enormous survival value. Those things that any organism doesn't have the time or the neural capacity to learn but needs to be able to do to survive and reproduce, are going to be encoded into it's inheritance if it is to have a chance at survival. Those individuals who either have the best genetic endowment for reflexes, or who have the capacity to modify genetically predetermined reflexes, have a better chance of survival and reproduction.

The modification and extension to new situations of genetically determined reflexes underlies the survival value of Pavlovian conditioning. Pavlovian conditioning is the fundamental building block of learning. It is so basic to how animals adapt to their environment that it is shown by virtually all animals, from simple multicellular organisms to humans. Pavlovian conditioning is all about the fact that we learn to associate these pre-existing stimulus response relationships to new stimuli. Ultimately, all Pavlovian conditioning has at its heart in-born, or unconditional reflexes that exist because of their basic survival value.

The characteristics of these inborn reflexes are:
- They are universally shown by all members of a species
- Reflexes have been inherited because they are adaptive
- They involve an activity that must occur with very little conditioning. For example, a baby does not have time to learn how to suckle
- The relationship between the environment (the stimulus) and behavior (the response) is non-arbitrary and relatively non-modifiable. For example, food produces salivation

Pavlovian Conditioning is said to occur when a previously neutral stimulus, such as a tone or light that normally is of little interest to the organism, becomes associated with an already existing reflex to the extent that it will, by itself, evoke a response. This new reflex is said to be conditional, in that its ability to evoke a response depends upon the stimulus having been associated with a previously existing reflex.

Pavlovian conditioning is often considered to be involuntary. The organism has little control over the response, in that the environment elicits the behavior from the organism. Operant behavior involves voluntary behavior that is emitted by the organism and is controlled by its consequences. Another way of looking at this difference is to look at the relationship between behavior and the environment. In Pavlovian conditioning, the relationship is stimulus-response but in operant it is response-stimulus. Whether responses occur in the future depend upon the nature of the contingency. If it makes life better for the organism, it will likely occur again in the
future, (reinforcement), and if it makes like worse, it will likely not occur again in the future .(punishment).

Pavlovian and operant are two halves of an integrated view of learned behavior. Pavlovian sets us up to act, and the action is the operant part of our behavior. By the same token, operant doesn't operate in a vacuum, we need to be motivated to act.

**Reinforcement and Punishment**
The terms reinforcement and punishment refer to a relationship between behavior and a resulting environmental change. The term reinforcement refers to a relationship between behavior and environment that results in an improvement of conditions for the individual, and punishment refers to a relationship that results in a worsening of conditions. Generally animals increase the frequency of acts that are reinforced, and decrease the frequency of acts that are punished.

In the “Training Soccer Legends” method only positive and negative reinforcement are permissible motivational sources because punishment destroys the motivational basis for self-generated effort and remaining in the environment.

**Positive Reinforcement**
The individual's behavior adds something desirable to the environment, thereby increasing the probability, under similar circumstances, of that behavior occurring again in the future. Positive reinforcement is what most applications of operant conditioning attempt to promote. In everyday terms, positive reinforcement means that behavior will be rewarded. For example, a student studies hard because she wants to get a good grade, or, more precisely, in scientific terms, in the past studying has produced high grades.

**Negative Reinforcement**
The individual's behavior removes something undesirable from the environment, thereby increasing the probability, under similar circumstances, of that behavior occurring again in the future.

**Higher-order Conditioning**
Not all Pavlovian operant conditioning involves the presence of an inborn reflex. Much of our conditioning occurs when a new stimulus is paired with an existing conditional reflex, thereby producing another trainable reflex. When an existing conditional reflex acts as the basis for yet another reflex, higher-order conditioning is said to occur.

**Relating this theory to the “Training Soccer Legends” Approach**
Operant conditioned 2 v 2 in a crowd, in front of goal will, when combined with appropriate positive and negative reinforcement, train players to react instinctively and creatively and employ the most effective tactical solution to the problem. Over time this higher-order conditioning makes players intuitive problem solvers. Dynamic, competitive, creative play that
demands constant repetition of these conditions, in addition to worthwhile reward and fair denial, will ultimately train soccer’s version of extra sensory perception and instinctual action. This is the final stage in the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum and the key to developing tactically brilliant, intuitive, creative dribblers, passers and goal scorers. Intuitive creative dribblers, passers and goal scorers, have more technical weapons in their arsenal and the tactical knowledge/speed to use them productively under pressure.

By applying different operant conditions to all 2 v 2 roles, every player will learn to automatically reproduce the instinctual tactically appropriate response every time a specific stimulus is recognized. For example, the first attacker could be conditioned to play every ball “one touch, two touch, fake/move within two touches”. What this means is on every possession the person with the ball is allowed only one “clean up” touch before shooting, passing or performing the appropriate fake to beat a player or create space. This conditions thinking ahead and gradually makes the adoption of an “on the ball” tactical plan ever more intuitive.

The second attacker could be conditioned to overlap the first attacker, (ball carrier), if positioned alongside or behind the first attacker when he initially gets possession. The second attacker could also be conditioned to set up a wall pass if positioned nearer to the opponent’s goal when possession is first attained. This conditions thinking ahead and, over time, makes prior adoption of an “off the ball” tactical plan intuitive.

The first defender can be conditioned to always maintain a goal side position in relation to the opponent.

The second defender can also be conditioned to always maintain a goal side position in relation to the opponent. Both of these condition intuitive ability to deny opposition penetration.

In this way all four players, (1st and 2nd attackers and defenders), are conditioned to focus on an appropriate impending action at every moment during practice. Gradually the players will enjoy greater success at instantly performing the required actions. In this way these actions begin to become intuitive. Eventually these actions will be performed quickly enough to justify the introduction of additional operant conditions and ultimately there will be so many operant conditions involved with every moment of play, that each will have to become instinctual and intuitive because there is insufficient time to perform all the required responses with cognitive forethought.

To make any attempt at conditioning responses maximally effective there has to be a system of reward and denial.

The following are examples of reward or denial used within the “Training Soccer Legends” system:

- If the first attacker does not play one touch, two touch, fake/move within two touches and takes two clean up touches at any time in possession, the ball is turned over to the other team, (Denial of possession – negative reinforcement).
• If the second attacker does not move to set up an overlap or wall pass at the very split
second that their teammate gets possession, the ball is turned over to the other team,
(Denial of possession – negative reinforcement).

• If the first or second defender lets the first or second attacker get goal side, even for a
split second, it counts as a goal against them and a goal for whichever of the attackers
managed to get goal side, (loss of a point for defender – negative reinforcement, one
point reward for attacker – positive reinforcement).

There are many ways to operant condition the 2 v 2 small-sided situation. A gradual process
of adding additional conditions to the 2 v 2 game will eventually make players intuitive at
performing the skills and tactical sequences involved in successful completion of those
conditions. In this way the whole team starts to play in the same tactically brilliant, integrated,
creative way at speed. This fosters both individual and tactical team intuition because all players
are expected to react instinctively and appropriately to pre-arranged stimuli. As a consequence of
layering in new conditions at the appropriate time, while retaining all previous conditions, the
intuitive abilities of the whole team are both integrated and creatively elevated to ever-higher
levels. By first creating conditions to promote intuition and then gradually adding more well-
chosen operant conditions, individual and tactical team intuition is trained to ever more
devastating levels, resulting in a true “team of brilliance” capable of destroying defenses with
instantaneous, intuitive, creative, technical and tactical action.

**Important Quick Note:** This flies in the face of traditional thinking that promotes a more
methodical, possession based build up where the defense is taught to play safe. Or where the
offense is taught to probe the defense for weaknesses and play a system in which every player
has a fairly rigid defined role. Traditional systems are designed to exploit opposition weaknesses
and hide team deficiencies. Conversely, the “Training Soccer Legends” approach is designed to
create individuals or small groups who can “think for themselves” and improvise to penetrate
creatively in many different ways, under numerous diverse circumstances. The traditional mode
of coaching has been popular mostly because human beings are generally risk adverse. However,
“What’s right isn’t always popular and what’s popular isn’t always right.” Coaches like to win
now. They understand position based systems that exploit existing player strengths, and are
trained to take time when making an important decision. Coaches usually act in a conservative
manner designed to reduce error and achieve the short-term win. The unique “Training Soccer
Legends” approach provides an incredibly creative 1 v 1, individual technical/tactical basis
where improvisation, risk and error are at first mandated. This unique creative individuality is
then gradually operant conditioned so that appropriate individual and team tactical responses are
reproduced intuitively in and around the penalty area, where soccer’s superstars have to first fail
extensively before learning to excel. In this way the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy
trains teams of exceptional tactical brilliance where every player is significantly more capable of
making the big individual and team plays that result in selection to the higher level of play.

At time of writing 25 Legends alums from the first 8 teams trained this way have been drafted
and/or played pro. It’s may be possible to dispute the theory but it’s hard to argue with the facts!!
Chapter Forty-One

Creativity in Crowds – Train “Bats in a Cave” Radar

While higher practice numbers may at first seem to be a negative, when analyzed in depth, lots of players in a restricted space helps players to hone their soccer intelligence and is actually a developmental positive.

Many coaches provide large, unchallenging voids for their players to practice in. In virtually all other programs 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 games are played in fifty-yard squares where each player has his own 250 square yards of space to operate in. There is a failure on the part of these coaches to recognize that the great plays occur in the clutch, where only those players who are able to solve the most confusing problems created by this crazy crowded version of human pinball will survive, let alone excel. Players trained by coaches who allow them plenty of practice space have no answers when the ball comes to them in the penalty area amid a morass of bodies. In this situation only the lightning fast, deceptive and creative solution will open up the scoring opportunity in the face of rapidly converging defensive pressure.

“If once upon a time religion, and then science, provided us with an image of an orderly, knowable, and determined world, in our age this image has crumbled. One of the challenges of complexity, Morin urges, is not to take sides for order or for disorder, not to polarize and dichotomize. Dichotomizing pathologizes, Maslow always reminded us. Let us not try to impose order, and the known, and in the process eliminate disorder, or vice versa. Morin urges us to connect, and to organize the constant dialogic interaction of order and disorder, so that we may indeed live on the edge of chaos, without falling off! Once we link order and disorder, we can view them not as radically opposed, but as engaged in a constant interaction both generative and destructive. Von Foerster (1983) formulated the principle of “order from noise,” echoing the intuitive insights of Nietzsche and the research of humanistic psychologists on creativity (Barron, 1990). Creativity involves not a fear and rejection of disorder, but the strength to embrace it and struggle to create a new order. Order without any unpredictable, disordered elements is complete homogeneity. Disorder without any order is chaos, in the popular sense of the word. This is all good and well, but in our daily lives, if the Great Composer is dead, what are we, as human beings to play? What to do when there is no appropriate score, no manual, no recipe? When we are confronted with the uncertainty of an ever-changing world? When on the one hand we expect to creatively solve problems, making things up as we go along, and on the other we still cling to notions of perfect orderly predictable behavior? If we refuse the pseudo-security of ready-made manuals, here postmodernists fail us. The big question is, Now what?

I would like to reflect in these pages on the notion that life in a complex world, and a life which reflects and values the complexity of both self and world, requires the ability to improvise--to deal with, and indeed to create, the unforeseen. Interestingly, the Latin root of improvisation is “improvisus,” or unforeseen. Life, and improvisation, require the ability to both react appropriately to unforeseen events, and actually generate those events--to act creatively and
innovatively. A musical improviser—a jazz musician, for example—both generates novelty, for instance, by making rhythmic, rhythmic, or melodic choices that are surprising, and reacts to the novelty generated by his or her fellow band-members. The piano player, for instance, might place an unusual chord behind a soloist in what would normally be a fairly predictable progression.
Alfonso Montuori

The “Training Soccer Legends” method utilizes Alfonso Montuori’s “Live of the edge of chaos without falling off” and “ability to improvise--to deal with, and indeed to create, the unforeseen ’ideas to the maximum possible degree.

The greatest improvisation challenges in the full game will be found in crowded areas of the field where opposition outnumber teammates and the defense is in a high pressure mode. This occurs most often in the opponent's defensive third or, more crucially, in their penalty area. In practice situations greater pressure can be created where 18-32 players, (including 2 goalies), are participating in 8 or more games of 1 v 1 or four or more games of 2 v 2, on a 25 x 25 yard field with goals at each end. Here, the game is total edge of chaos offense/defense where either one player on his own, or two players in combination, have to find a way through the intense defensive pressure involving one immediate opponent and large numbers of other players who all present problems to the individual in possession. This effectively turns a 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 into a situation where there are many extraneous considerations and complications to be overcome. In this way the challenge presented is greater than that encountered in the real 11 v 11 game, where at any time you may have 10 helpers and only 11 opponents who can impede your progress. Furthermore, in the 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 on a small field, space and time are at a premium, whereas in a full size open field 11 v 11 game, players will always have significantly less pressure to deal with.

“In the tumult and uproar, the battle seems chaotic, but there is no disorder; the troops appear to be milling about in circles but cannot be defeated.”
Sun Tzu, (The Art of War)

To fully understand the benefit of large numbers and crowded chaotic practices it helps to be familiar with the "tactical continuum". On one extreme of the tactical continuum is 1 v 1. It is the most difficult and beneficial tactical challenge for early soccer development because it involves the maximum number of tactical challenges possible in a "clutch skill" environment, while guaranteeing 50% of ball possession. This circumstance is the smallest tactical unit of soccer. It maximizes the ability of a player to dominate the immediate opponent offensively and defensively, and has the tremendous benefit of developing incredible deception and touch. However, it has the disadvantage of minimizing the number of team tactical decisions needing to be made. On the far extreme of difficulty in the tactical continuum from the 1 v 1 is the 11 v 11 game. This has the obvious challenge of involving the most variables and necessitating the maximum number of decisions, but has the disadvantage of restricting ball touches to an absolute minimum. Therefore, the traditional coach either develops tactical strength in 1v1 situations at the sacrifice of the bigger picture, nurtures the ability to read 11v 11 situations at the expense of
the 1v1, or adopts a “middle of the road stance” where his players do neither really well. The challenge for the great coach is to create an environment with both maximum touches on the ball and more variables than the real game. This is why we run our team practices with a large number of players, but break down the competitive units to 1 v 1 or 2 v 2, all playing on the same small field simultaneously. By doing this we develop great one on one players who are also able to excel at identifying team options, in the clutch, under tremendous pressure.

When the real 11 v 11 game is examined it can be seen that the greatest tactical challenge is encountered in and around the penalty area with multiple defenders and attackers, plus the constraints of the offside rule. Here the tactical abilities of the player are not only challenged by numerous technical/tactical alternatives, but also by restrictions of space, time, psychological pressure and offside. Normally, there won't be any more than 16 players in and around the penalty area in the full game except perhaps on a corner when 18 or 19 players may be within 20 yards of the goal. If the coach is to establish a combined technical and tactical challenge many times greater than that encountered in the most challenging part of the full 11 v 11 game, he will need to create an environment with the following characteristics:

- 2 age appropriate goals
- More than 20 players playing in the same area
- 1v1 or 2v2 small sided games
- Small playing area between the goals
- Everyone playing on same small space shooting in same goals
- No bibs (To facilitate head up recognition and verbal communication)
- Conditions i.e. players must do a fake on every possession to encourage early decision making and skillful play
- A gradual addition of ever more complicated conditions.

By adhering to the above points the coach will create an environment that guarantees maximum ball touches, skill development and an ever increasing number of variables that must be constantly and quickly analyzed. In this way the coach will force his players to play creatively and intuitively, however because only 1 or 2 of those other players will be immediate teammates or opponents, the coach can maximize both the 1 v 1 ball touch benefit and the 11 v 11 decision making benefits.

Because of the need to develop the intuitive tactical mind the “Training Soccer Legends” method eventually combines team practices, but this only happens once the creative deceptive dribbling and shooting technical training stage has been largely completed. In the Legends club we find we are unable to train a great player unless he first learns to take players on and score and then gradually transitions to playing quickly, coolly, skillfully and incisively, with a teammate, in a crowd. We have always found that training just one team per practice creates large open spaces and an over abundance of space and time which is very detrimental to the development of the ability to think and play quickly under great pressure. Having less than the optimum number of players in practice is detrimental to developing a truly brilliant player who can compute multiple variables and arrive at the correct option selection, within the limits of their technical repertoire,
instantly. Furthermore, instituting a policy of crowded training areas enhances the development of tremendous creative technical skills and intuitive improvisation. This widens the range of effective tactical possibilities, thereby creating a far greater choice of tactical options.

We feel that our players will not develop the "bats in a cave" radar they need to succeed at the highest level if there are only a "few bats in the cave". Consequently, we fill the cave with bats and our players develop a soccer radar that is marvelous to behold.

Any time a player trained in this manner finds himself under pressure in either penalty area he will be much more likely to succeed defensively or offensively, if the pressure he has experienced in practice is constantly greater than that he ever encounters in the game. Unfortunately, if practices are held with a single team this is unlikely to be the case. Even if all his teammates show up to every practice, (which rarely ever happens), the number of bodies in the limited practice area won't be enough to force him to think and play at maximum speed under optimum pressure conditions.

If, as a coach, you want your players to be creative soccer geniuses who can think at incredible speed and solve unbelievably complex tactical problems intuitively, plus have the technical repertoire to implement the correct solution, I suggest you support the two team per practice policy wholeheartedly. I fight like a dog to make it happen because the benefits are so completely logical and comprehensively proven by the many players I have trained who have achieved great success as a result of this system.

**Important Quick Note:** The human mind adapts phenomenally quickly to difficult yet achievable goals and finds ways to conquer the challenges presented. Playing in a crowd in small areas in front of goal, subjects the player to a far greater number of pressures and decision making opportunities than can ever be encountered in the most challenging parts of the real game. Players trained for many years in these circumstances eventually develop a computer like mental speed, under pressure, in the clutch. This process of assessing and computing variables and selecting the appropriate solution is constantly refined until the whole process becomes intuitive and occurs at the breakneck speed that is absolutely necessary for playing at the highest levels with success.
Chapter Forty-Two

Teach Crucial Roles Not Conventional Positioning

This section describes the essential process of teaching “crucial positioning” and the role of the 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 in this process.

The “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy is unique in many different ways. One of the totally novel ways in which the Legends approach differs is the belief that the optimum practice ratio of players to ball at the youth level, (till age 18), should be either 2 to 1 or 4 to 1. It is our conviction that anything involving more players than 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 reduces the technical and tactical challenges and benefits to unjustifiable levels. This is because of the obvious cost to ball touches involved in match ups greater than 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 but also because the “essential positions” of the game of soccer are best taught in the 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 game.

Soccer has many conventional positions. Some of these are:

- Right back
- Left Back
- Center Back
- Sweeper
- Outside right midfield
- Center midfield
- Defensive midfield
- Offensive midfield
- Outside left midfield
- Center striker
- Right wing
- Left wing

Within these conventional positions most traditional coaches teach players to play to their strengths and hide their weaknesses so that conventional positions become ever more rigid and inflexible in their challenges and demands.

The Legends philosophy completely rejects that any practice time before age 18 should be spent on learning the limited roles and responsibilities of specific conventional positions. This is because players trained in this manner end up with extremely limited roles and responsibilities like the positions they are trained for. Because of this they do not learn to display any versatility or improvisational ability in their play and are lost when they attempt the skills, tactics, physical and psychological challenges inherent to other positions.
As opposed to the above list of conventional positions the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy trains just four “essential” or “crucial” positions that must be mastered in order to play at the very highest level, these are:

- First attacker
- Second attacker
- First defender
- Second defender

Let’s examine why these are the only essential positions in soccer.

First we need to understand that each and every choice of practice content has a benefit versus cost relationship. There are many “benefit versus cost” evaluations that go into the establishment of a great practice or coaching philosophy.

For example, practicing the “off-side trap” may have great benefit in helping obtain a win in the short-term. However, the cost to development might be devastating because the players involved may never again play in a system that uses the “off-side trap”. In this example the pursuit of the short-term win may have a totally detrimental, (time wasted), impact on the ability of the players concerned to subsequently perform brilliantly at the highest level.

A great developmental coaching philosophy is one that maximizes the essential learning components needed for a player to attain and perform well at the very highest level (World Cup Final). With this in mind every developmental purist should select all practice content with the question, “What does this session need to teach for it to best prepare my players for the World Cup Final?” i.e. the very highest level.

For a field player to be able to play at the very highest level that player needs to very good at 4 things. In priority order of importance these four things are:

- Dominate the ball under pressure and have the ability and confidence to create penetrating opportunities for ones-self and the team. This component is the “Quarterback factor”. Every high-level soccer player has to be able to perform an equivalent role to that of the talented football quarterback who alternately fakes, passes and runs to create penetration for his team.

  We call this role or position “The first attacker”.

- Understand, set up and execute key combination plays with the first attacker. This position or role involves making deceptive runs at full speed to get open to receive the ball. It also requires the ability to do something skillful and deceptive with the ball and in combination with a teammate to create penetration. The key combination plays are:
  1. Wall Pass
  2. Wall Pass Fake
3. Overlap
4. Overlap Fake
5. Take Over

We call this position “The second attacker”

- Prevent penetration or meaningful distribution by the man with the ball. Objectives here include denying the shot, preventing the penetrating dribble and severely restricting the options for the forward pass.

We call this position “The first defender”

- Prevent penetrating support for the opposition ball carrier by players on the opposing team. Objectives here include always being able to see one’s 2nd attacker and the ball, providing cover to the first defender, matching up with the 2nd attacker, preventing the penetrating dribble if the first defender is beaten and always severely restricting the options for the penetrating pass.

We call this position “The second defender”

As you can see we have broken down the traditional position based approach to soccer into 4 more effective developmental units. Simply put; players who learn to perform excellent 1st and 2nd attacker, plus 1st and 2nd defender roles and tasks, are going to be better prepared to achieve “clutch play” excellence and be successful at the very highest level.

Traditionally coached teams who train their players in narrow, task specific individual or team roles, (i.e. “Sweeper” or “Off-side trap”), will probably win more at the earlier ages and stages of development, but will inevitably limit the future horizons of their players. This is because the development of individual dribbling brilliance involves “high risk” and high-risk play guarantees that a multitude of mistakes must be made and paid for, before the acquisition of fantastic skill can ever occur to a degree that ensures regular successful performance.

*If you're not making mistakes, then you're not doing anything. I'm positive that a doer makes mistakes.*

*John Wooden*

In the “Training Soccer Legends” ethos we prioritize logically as follows:

- Firstly, we spend years training the first attacker capabilities because this responsibility is the crucial one. Without the ability to be a brilliant deceptive ball carrier a player will always be likely to lose out to the defender. By comparison to offense, defense is very easy. Destruction by its very nature is the quickest and easiest way to make a difference. Creation takes far longer and is extremely difficult. This is why the creative technical
training and 1 v 1, (first attacker v first defender), stages are so very time consuming. It is interesting to note that the 1 v 1 stage has a double benefit because while we are training the “first attacker” we are also training the very best “first defenders”. This is because the first defenders in our program have to be able to nullify the best prepared deceptive dribblers and finishers (first attackers). Therefore, because our practice philosophy involves a tremendous amount of 1 v 1 we train a far greater ability in the “crucial” or “clutch”, creative offensive and destructive defensive responsibilities than more traditional coaching philosophies. As a consequence a simple exercise in logic will result in the realization that the Legends program trains the best “first attackers” while simultaneously developing the very best “first defenders”.

"There is no greater joy than that of feeling oneself a creator. The triumph of life is expressed by creation."
Henri Bergson

- Secondly, after a number of years when our players have developed into tremendous first attackers and first defenders, these talented individuals are ready to develop expertise in the 2 v 2 situation. This is where they learn to utilize their 1 v 1 skills in combination with others to create a devastating two player offensive unit.

No player who hasn’t spent the significant time and practice on the essential 1 v 1 skills needed to dominate an opponent, can ever be a truly effective 2 v 2 player. This is because the “on the ball” skills needed to set up and execute a “passing” or “combination” play at the perfect moment are those of the incredible deceptive dribbler. This is why the Brazilians are the world’s best deceptive dribblers and also the world’s best “wall passers”. If the ball carrier has the ability and confidence to hold the ball until the perfect moment to pass and “set up” the defender, the “wall pass” play is virtually unstoppable. In the “wall pass” the ball carrier must be able to “commit” the first defender. “Committing” a defender involves deceiving him into thinking that he can win the ball by using it as bait. Once the defender has “committed” to the ball it is then possible for the ball carrier to pass it quickly and accelerate into the space behind the defender for the return pass.

“Offer the enemy a bait or lure him; feign disorder and strike him.”
Sun Tzu, (The Art of War)

A great ball carrier is truly able to set up and execute all the combination plays of soccer far more effectively than someone with little dribbling training. Coaches who have failed to train their players to be great deceptive dribblers spend many a frustrating practice trying to get their players to execute a well timed “wall pass”. Even when they get some limited practice success, all their efforts come to naught in the games because their players can’t perform effectively under game pressure and fail to “commit” defenders before initiating the “wall pass”. An inability to dribble the ball effectively will lead to the breakdown of all the crucial combination plays and the consequent failure of the coach’s offensive scheme.
“There are many people, particularly in sports, who think that success and excellence are the same thing and they are not the same thing. Excellence is something that is lasting and dependable and largely within a person’s control. In contrast, success is perishable and is often outside our control... If you strive for excellence, you will probably be successful eventually... people who put excellence in first place have the patience to end up with success... An additional burden for the victim of the success mentality is that he/she is threatened by the success of others and resents real excellence. In contrast, the person fascinated by quality is excited when he/she sees it in others.”

Joe Paterno

It is therefore indisputable that a truly great developmental program must spend a tremendous amount of time, (years!!!), on developing the first attacker skills of deceptive dribbling. Without developing an incredible ability to deceive and beat players with the ball it is, in the long run, impossible to become a truly effective “team” player. Team players must be able to respond when their teammates make good runs and deliver the ball at precisely the right moment. The ball must also be delivered in exactly the right manner for that player to make maximum use of the opportunity. Unless the ball carrier just happens by chance to be in exactly the right place with the perfect body position at the moment that their teammate makes a run, they will have to quickly adjust both body and ball position to make the pass possible. At the lower levels, where defenders are not so astute or experienced, it may be possible to adjust both ball and body position slowly and still make the play, however, the higher the standard of play the greater the defensive pressure and the greater the degree of touch and deception needed. At the upper echelon of the game defenders are all fast, powerful and experienced leaving no margin of error for even the very best of deceptive dribblers. This is why many teams who are effective in scoring at the lower levels of play fail completely when they compete against better and more experienced defenses.

Only when the “first attacker” skills of deceptive dribbling and finishing have been extensively developed can the coach work on the combination plays listed above with any hope of success. Therefore, in one of the great contradictions of soccer it can be seen that to penetrate a well marshaled defense by passing requires great touch and dribbling ability.

It’s ironic that the only way to develop a great “clutch” or “big play” passing team is to spend years training players to first be a great dribbler. One only has to look at the great Brazilian players from the last four decades to see the truth in this statement. For those more familiar with basketball the NBA provides a model where most of the greatest players were developed in the “dribble and shoot” environment of the inner city.

“To be a concert pianist, you need a tuxedo, a grand piano, a top-notch agent, and many other things, but it’s all a waste without technique. You have to be able to play piano. Similarly, you need knowledge of the game, tactics, etc., but it’s all a waste if you can’t dribble and shoot the ball. Technique, technique, technique.”

Author Unknown
In his book “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” Dr Stephen Covey writes about the “Law of the Farm”. This is where the farmer has to first till, sow and fertilize his land in order to reap a bumper crop at harvest time. In soccer the coach has to first teach players to truly master the ball in order to eventually produce a team of brilliance. There are many short cuts to achieving the short-term team win but all of these “short cuts” come at the expense of individual development and long-term achievement. It takes years of constant emphasis and challenge to develop “first attackers”, (ball carriers), with the ability to create space with the ball and beat players one on one. Then, and only then, can the coach teach effective team play in the attacking third of the field.

The simple truth is that great coaches don’t teach “traditional positions”. They teach “crucial positions”. The “first attacker” is the most important position in the game and must be taught first because all else succeeds or fails with the brilliance or ineptitude of the ball carrier. The “second attacker” is the only other creative position that matters because even the very best first attackers will need support in order to penetrate in the attacking third of the field. Please note that all other teammates are second attackers in support of the ball carrier.

The “first defender” position is the third most important because the man defending the ball has the responsibility to nullify, or at least limit, an opponent’s attacking options making it unlikely that the other team will penetrate and score.

The “second defender” position is the last crucial one. Great second defenders take away an opponent’s forward passing options and provide cover to the first defender in case he is beaten.

The “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy maximizes ability in all four areas.

**Important Quick Note:** As in life where the ability to read and write expertly helps in the quest to reach the top in all vocations, soccer players need to learn to dribble and shoot, at speed, under pressure to be effective in any position and go to the very top. Yet in other programs the desire for instant gratification, (the win), leads coaches to pigeonhole players in conventional positions and thereby rob the young player of the opportunity to develop the great finishing and dribbling skills that will enable him to reach the summit. This pigeonholing also denies that player all the fun and positive self-concept that goes hand-in-hand with learning to dominate and master the ball.
Chapter Forty-Three

The Legends Way of Teaching Conventional Positions

In the “Training Soccer Legends” approach all conventional positional training occurs in the game situation, not in practice. We refuse to waste valuable practice time teaching a player the nuances of one position when the next coach that player plays for may never play him in that position. None of our coaching staff has a crystal ball with which to see the future positions of our players, therefore we don’t restrict them to specializing in one role. Specialization is a tactic for the express purpose of winning games not for helping the individual maximize the myriad of abilities that will be needed at the next level of play. For this reason the long-term cost of frittering away essential practice time on positional or “functional” training, as opposed to individual and small-sided combination penetration and prevention, is far greater than the benefit. Because of this our coaches choose to focus their valuable practice time on areas of the game that are guaranteed to benefit the player at the next level and coach positional functions and priorities prior to, during and after games.

We fully realize that the players we coach will have less reactionary efficiency in the simple rote aspects of a specific position than many of their opponents. However the greater compensations provided by being far more skillful and able to improvise solutions instead of rigidly producing a robot like response, will pay great dividends in being more versatile and generally more effective in providing answers to clutch or crucial situations. This game based approach to teaching positional play has a tremendous benefit to soccer career advancement because Legends trained players have a more diverse range of technical and tactical tools with which to solve the myriad of non-positional specific technical and tactical challenges the game produces. Legends players always train in and around the penalty area. Constantly practicing in front of both goals involves an incredible number of crucial positional plays. This endless clutch play repetition makes our players:

- Significantly more efficient at applying unconventional solutions to conventional positions.
- Less predictable to opponents.

Consequently Legends trained players are far more effective in conventional positions than players with limited technical ability and fewer options to choose from. As a consequence of deciding not to waste practice time on conventional positioning, our coaches have to work very hard in the game situation. They have to recognize coachable moments and provide maximum positional input in an effective manner at the appropriate time.
Chapter Forty-Four

The Initial Dribble and Shoot Emphasis Must be Total

The vast majority of coaches split time between various skills of the game at the younger stages of development. At first, this approach seems to make sense because players need to be proficient in passing, receiving, tackling and heading. However, after much experimentation it has become evident that unless the emphasis is 100% on dribbling and finishing the player will take the easy way out and give the ball, (responsibility), to a teammate instead of trying the fake or taking the shot. In soccer as in life it is far easier to give away, or refuse to take, responsibility. Dribbling is one skill where the player has to walk tall, take a leadership role and attempt to make something special happen with all eyes upon him. Shooting is the other skill where players have to step up and take the responsibility to decide whether or not the whole team is rewarded for its efforts with a win. For the 5 to 15 year old, taking the full responsibility for the deceptive dribble or for the difficult shot is an extremely daunting and intimidating task. They know that if they fail they will be publicly analyzed and found to be inadequate, at least for that particular play. It is because of this fear of public humiliation and failure that the willingness to attempt the most difficult dribbling and finishing skills is the ultimate acceptance of responsibility. As great coaches it is our primary responsibility to teach every child that life is about taking intelligent risk; that every mistake is a friend; that mistakes should be welcomed as bringing us one step nearer to our goal of creative independence and elite interdependence.

“To win without risk is to triumph without glory”
Pierre Corneille

The great coach will teach world-class dribbling fakes/moves plus all shooting techniques in practice and insist upon their use in games. He will demand their use until players are completely comfortable with taking the responsibility to try them, with no thought of the statistical result. By doing this he will build incredible self-belief and confidence in each of his players, thereby making mature acceptance of responsibility a foregone conclusion and a self-fulfilling prophecy.

"Most people live and die with their music still un-played. They never dare to try."
Mary Kay Ash

“The man who follows the crowd, will get no further than the crowd. The man who walks alone is likely to find himself in places no one has ever been before. Creativity in living is not without it’s attendant difficulties, for peculiarity breeds contempt. And the unfortunate thing about being ahead of your time is when people finally realize you were right, they’ll say it was obvious all along. You have two choices in life: You can dissolve into the mainstream, or you can be distinct. To be distinct, you must be different. To be different you must strive to be what no one else but you can be.”
Alan Ashley Pitt
The hardest part of teaching is conditioning individuals to take a positive creative leadership role. Only by making a person feel exceptional will a coach reap the rewards associated with a team full of creative leaders. Having a full squad of players who are all capable of stepping into a positive leadership role at the appropriate moment is a coach’s dream. The dream becomes a reality if the coach adopts a total creative, (100% dribbling and shooting), emphasis from day one and pursues the most difficult and challenging techniques, (positive creative risk taking), relentlessly, throughout the young player's youth career. The ability to 'walk tall' or have a good self-concept is a learned attribute. It comes from the certain knowledge that you have a very special talent. Without this knowledge the cornerstone of success, i.e. confidence, remains buried behind individual insecurities. This incredibly potent characteristic, (confidence), comes from being outstanding, a leader in your chosen field. The challenge to the exceptional coach is the creation of the exceptional player. Any player who is taught to be capable of creatively dominating the soccer ball under the pressure of opposition, psychological stress and physical fatigue will know she is outstanding. That player will take the aura of invincibility into every soccer environment. It will enable her to make the travel team, the state select squad and high school varsity as a freshman or sophomore. It will give her a reason to believe in herself in a world where the main barriers between “I can” and “I can’t” are self-concept and confidence. Eventually that self-confidence will permeate her every daily action and trigger positive solution oriented responses to even the most difficult of circumstances. This is because once an individual has achieved success in one difficult, and challenging competitive environment it becomes easier to believe in ones capability in another. As a pre-teen when personal success is selfish and individually oriented, the soccer player's ability with the ball will be her one true gauge of how good at soccer she is. A totally creative, individually oriented technical and tactical approach will maximize her ability with a soccer ball. Thus, she will have a perception or self-image of personal brilliance and accomplishment. This technical growth triggers personal psychological strength and develops a self-belief born from exceptional development. Another bonus associated with this training philosophy is its functionality in the long-term view or "big picture". Put simply, great teams are made of great players. In any team sport all players with exceptionally creative/deceptive dribbling ability and the training to score under pressure, will have tremendous coordination and agility. Coordination and agility are the building blocks of an athletic career. In most sports tremendous footwork is essential for the professional player. This is even more so in soccer because the execution of skills demands that the feet not only guide the body but also the ball simultaneously. Soccer is unique because players must consider the placement of the feet with relation to body position and the ball when dribbling, shooting, passing or receiving. No other sport demands this level of footwork, agility and coordination.

Thus, in the certain knowledge that total control of the ball under extreme pressure builds the necessary platform for future technical and tactical speed, it becomes the responsibility of every coach to teach only the most difficult creative skills exclusively at the pre-teen stage of development. Then, and only then, will the platform for excellence be established. Practice content is the springboard to the stars or the trapdoor to the cellar. Good coaches will make their practices a festival of fun and creation plus a celebration of deception and power for their players. They will demand the unusual, encourage the unique and promote the attempt for a
faster, more deceptive, move or fake. Not only for its value to the team, but also for its motivational benefits and agility developing characteristics. In this way great coaches will develop players who are able to move into teamwork and tactics with far more success during the teenage years. This is because offensive tactical options are determined by creative technical ability and each team is only as strong as its weakest player.

“You cannot make a man by standing a sheep on its hind legs. But by standing a flock of sheep in that position you can make a crowd of men.”
Max Beerbohm

A whole squad with great individual abilities will have more pieces with which to solve the puzzle or more weapons with which to win the war. This makes the job of coaching more exciting and rewarding because the players can aspire to, and produce at, a higher level than their peers from other programs, who were trained in a less creative manner.

“The uncreative mind can spot the wrong answer, but it takes a creative mind to spot the wrong question.”
Author Unknown

Magic Johnson spent years off the court learning to dribble to get what he calls "touch". He wrote, "After hours and days and months and years of dribbling all over town and every different way - behind my back, between my legs - that basketball was like a part of me, like another arm. By then, I just had the touch and it was as if the ball wasn't there. That's what dribbling is - touch. Once I got it I knew the game was under my control. I wanted to be able to feel the ball without looking at it. I wanted it to go where I went without fighting it or searching for it. I wanted to be able to make my fanciest moves, spinning and twisting for the basket, and have the ball be right there in my hand. When I was coming down the floor against the defense, I wanted to keep my head up so I could see the whole floor, not looking down to search for the basketball. The only way I could do that was to have the touch."

"There is no greater joy than that of feeling oneself a creator. The triumph of life is expressed by creation."
Henri Bergson

Wayne Gretsky wrote that as a youngster the only thing he wanted to do in the Winter was skate, "I'd get up in the morning, skate from 7:00 to 8:30, go to school, come home at 3:30, stay on the ice until my mom insisted I come in for dinner, eat in my skates, then go back out until 9:00. On Saturdays and Sundays, we'd have huge games, but nighttime became my time. It was sort of an unwritten rule around the neighborhood that I was to be out there by myself or with my dad. I would just handle the puck in and out of these empty detergent bottles my dad set up as pylons. Then I'd set up targets in the net and try to hit them with forehands, backhands, whatever. Then I'd do it all again, except this time with a tennis ball, which is much harder to handle....I was so addicted that my dad had big kids come over and play 1 v 1 against me. And when the kids
wanted to go home, I'd beg them to stay longer. I suppose that's how I was always able to do so well against the bigger guys later on. That's all I could get to play against."

"Wise men make good choices. But only gods create!"
*Andy Barney*

The ability to choose correctly between available options is a relatively difficult life skill. However, this difficulty pales by comparison with the ability to create a better option if those available don’t help you get closer to your goal. The challenge of creation is whether you will be able to carve out new ways to solve life’s problems when the obvious approach just doesn’t cut the mustard. That’s why players who can create their own opportunities at the highest level are “Soccer gods” to the fans.

“A Great Leader Is A Merchant Of Hope”
*Napoleon Bonaparte*

**Important Quick Note:** Given the choice the great coach will train players to be “Soccer gods”, i.e. players able to create their own options, if necessary by faking their opponents with a deceptive dribble until they create the shooting or passing opportunity. The Basketball god was Michael Jordan not Larry Bird. Both were great shooters but only one could create unique opportunities with a deceptive dribble. For the same reasons Wayne Gretsky was the “Hockey god” and Pele and Maradona “Soccer gods”.
Chapter Forty-Five

Begin Skill Training With the Most Difficult

In physiological learning the eventual level of achievement will be dictated by three main things:
- The genetic make up of the pupil
- The length of practice
- The type of practice i.e. content and intensity

Conventional wisdom dictates that learning should begin at the beginning, which means start with the very basic skills and go from there. However, the good coach will recognize that optimal challenge will reap maximum reward. In plain English, if the player is capable of performing even a relatively difficult skill with a measure of success, that should be the starting point. The rationale for this is unshakeable. Firstly, to start with the simple and work forward to the more difficult will be less motivational than performing a more difficult yet manageable skill. Mastering complicated techniques will give the player a greater sense of accomplishment and a solid desire to move on to the next level. Performing repetitious tasks that are easy will destroy motivation and erode the enthusiasm necessary for eager anticipation of the next challenge. Secondly, the purely physical benefits of mastering a more complicated movement pattern will create more efficient neuromuscular pathways and a greater versatility of response to more advanced physiological challenges in the future. Thirdly, because of the nature of the challenge and the pressures involved, certain techniques will provide a significant transfer, (carry over), to others, whereas the reverse is not necessarily the case. An example of this is shooting as opposed to passing. In shooting, the skill is highly pressured by opponents, needs to be relatively powerful, has a limited target area and greater psychological negatives associated with the possibility of failure. By comparison passing is less difficult in all instances. Thus the transfer from shooting to passing is very positive and will enhance all round development. However, transfer from passing to shooting is minimal, therefore, the training benefit from a passing practice will be far poorer than from a finishing session.

With the above in mind proficient coaches will select the skill or skills to be practiced based upon their relative degree of difficulty and the extent to which positive transfer of training will occur. Furthermore, the chosen skill should be evaluated to determine what level of difficulty would be optimally beneficial. For example a dribbling practice could begin with running in straight lines or attempting a more difficult fake or move. If the fake can be performed with a reasonable degree of success then straightforward running with the ball should be abandoned in favor of the more difficult fake technique.

“Conquering any difficulty always gives one a secret joy, for it means pushing back a boundary-line and adding to one’s liberty.”
Henri Frédéric Amiel
“Great creativity is the product of exceptional technique”

Michaelangelo

The conscious mind is generally capable of dealing with only one thing at a time. We call this concentration. When we hit a poor shot we often say that we didn't concentrate. The problem may actually have been that we were concentrating on too many things, or maybe even that we were concentrating on the wrong thing, i.e. the position of the goalkeeper rather than the target area on the ball.

It takes a certain amount of time for the body to learn a simple motion, much longer than most people would imagine! Therefore, it is important to practice a new motion for at least three to four weeks, (if practicing regularly), before moving on to something new. If you do any less, you run the risk of not learning the motion, or you may only partially learn it, depending on how often and over how long of a time span you practice.

For definition purposes I say learning occurs when a conscious effort to put the body in a particular position, or to move it in a certain way, is transformed from a totally conscious action to an automatic action requiring little or no thought.

This is called "muscle memory." It's as if the muscles have a mind of their own—they can perform amazingly complex motions without the player having to think about it. The important thing to realize is that to learn a new movement you must practice that movement over a long enough period so that the movement becomes automatic. Don't move on to something else until this motion has been learned at the subconscious level, or until "muscle memory" has been developed.

Most uninformed soccer coaches jump around from skill to skill. Every week they start work on something new, and lose what they were trying to teach, but didn't groove, in the preceding week. This is one reason why soccer players with ambition should skip the recreational or parent-coached team and seek the services of a skilled instructor.

In the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy we spend vastly more time than other programs on perfecting dribbling and shooting technique. This is necessary to help our players make the perfect move or take the perfect shot when needed. The importance of spending a tremendous amount of practice time grooving each skill is clearly illustrated as follows:

As a budding Physical Education teacher, I decided it would be help me get a good job after College if I became an Olympic Weightlifting Coach. Therefore, I attended a BAWLA (British
Amateur Weight Lifting Association), coaching course. The National Staff Coach teaching the course asked me to demonstrate the Power Clean to other aspiring coaches. I performed what I thought was a competent action and my first reaction was to be quite pleased with the lift. However, I had made the cardinal error of holding the bar a quarter of an inch away from my shins in the first part of the lift. The coach berated me for such poor technique!! He then performed a mathematical calculation to show us how much less weight can be lifted if the technique is just one quarter of an inch from perfect.

It was at that instant I realized how all my soccer playing and coaching life I’d been learning and teaching skills in a loose and imperfect manner. None of my own coaches had ever expected me to spend significant time grilling and drilling my skills until they were instantaneous and perfect. Consequently I had coached others with a similarly easy-going level of expectation. These days when I teach I expect my players to fully understand and attempt the perfect technique on every repetition of each move or shot. There is nearly always something to praise and something to improve in every skill performance. However, most coaches are unwilling to spend the emotional energy encouraging and pushing their players towards the technical brilliance needed to play at the highest level. These coaches allow their players to “get by” because it is easier to achieve the short term win by using the talents the players already have and pigeonholing them into a position based passing system that discourages individual risk.

Great coaches will expect players to always attempt a perfect technical skill. To achieve this objective they will spend a number of weeks on each skill until its performance under pressure in the game or scrimmage, is close to faultless. No matter how hard one tries nothing will ever be perfect but attaining perfection should always be the goal.

“Ring the bells that still can ring,
Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack in everything
That’s how the light gets in”
Leonard Cohen
Chapter Forty-Seven
Well Matched – Well Motivated!!

Usually when new players join a team club they have to step in as the low man on the totem pole and find themselves above their heads for a while. Some survive but many quit because it can be very demoralizing to realize that you're playing and training in a standard that is above your capabilities. The ideal situation in any training session is to have enough players at a similar level of play that all can challenge each other optimally and create a positive developmental dynamic that is mutually beneficial for those involved. This objective also benefits players in the game situation because the whole team can play together at the appropriate level without feeling inadequate by comparison with either teammates or opponents.

If there is a disparity in team talent the coach is forced into playing at a level that is too advanced for the weaker or too easy for the stronger player. Placing a team in a league where some players are playing above or below their optimum developmental standard is less than ideal for maximum personal growth. A homogenous group of players can be placed in the appropriate level of league so that they can perform the incredibly difficult moves involved with the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum and get situational reinforcement. As a result of competing at the appropriate developmental level the players will feel good about themselves and be able to step up to a higher level quicker in future.

The principle of “well matched – well motivated” also applies to the practice scenario. The “Training Soccer Legends” system encourages the sub-division of practices so that every player enjoys their fair share of ball possession and consequently optimum development. Coaching this system through the technical, 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 phases allows the coach to break every group of players into larger or smaller homogenous units depending on the abilities of the players within the group. Many Legends training sessions will involve two different levels of teams practicing simultaneously on the same small field. Sub-dividing this large group of players into smaller homogenous groups is a tremendously beneficial aid to development that will significantly improve essential components of personal learning, e.g. self-concept, number of touches and ratio of success/reinforcement.

Possibly the best way of emphasizing this point is to use an individual sport comparison such as tennis. If a less capable player attempts to play above their level they will suffer some heavy defeats and experience the negatives associated with rarely being able to make a winning shot. This eventually becomes very demoralizing. This occurs to the same degree with team sports. However, if the stronger end of the team can carry the weaker players this seems acceptable to parents and coaches. In reality it is just as demoralizing for the weaker individual in the team and eventually that player will probably quit soccer to pursue something she can be successful at.
Every aspect of the “Training Soccer Legends” program has been selected and adopted with the development of the individual in mind. Therefore, where our coaches recommend that an individual plays on a team in a higher or lower division it will always be because it provides the best developmental opportunity for the player concerned.

A novice to the “Training Soccer Legends” system will usually be better off playing at a lower level than in other traditional systems while she is learning the incredibly difficult moves we teach. While playing in a lower division she will get more ball possession in an environment where she can enjoy more deceptive dribbling success.

The equation is very simple. The stronger players get more ball time and improve to a greater degree because of that extra possession. However, the weaker players get less time on the ball and get relatively weaker when compared to the stronger players. Therefore, because our program emphasizes the use of the most daunting and difficult neuromuscular skills of soccer, we must ensure that each player competes in a practice and game standard that allows them success and reinforces the use of these skills.

If a player is on the weak end of a stronger team and is playing in a standard appropriate for the stronger players, she gets little ball because the opponents and better players possess it more. Furthermore, when the weaker player does get the ball the pressure is greater and she rarely has an opportunity to enjoy success. This is especially true with the “Training Soccer Legends” high risk, fake and move philosophy where players need to enjoy a reasonable amount of situational reinforcement, i.e. successful performance and outcome.

Compare this to a situation where an individual is playing at the appropriate level. Here she can attempt and get success with her moves. In this environment her confidence will grow continually because she will get an equal share of the possession and opportunity to develop. Plus she will enjoy the feeling of accomplishment and self-concept that goes hand in hand with successful performance.

**Important Quick Note:** The vast majority of parents will want their children in an environment where an appropriate level of challenge and situational reinforcement is guaranteed. To continually expose ones' child to challenges where success cannot regularly be achieved is completely detrimental to that child's short and long-term self-concept and psychological attachment to that pursuit. This is only magnified in competitive sports where any deficiencies are highlighted in a tremendously public forum. Unfortunately this often results in frustration and burn out causing the disillusioned player to leave the team.

Legends coaches structure practices so that each player can enjoy success. However, no coach can structure competitive games to achieve this objective if their team contains a wide diversity of talent & ability. This is why players must be placed at the appropriate participation level on reasonably homogenous teams to ensure individual success and continued positive progress.
Chapter Forty-Eight

Equal Time=High Self-Concept=Maximum Potential

“If you can look into the seeds of time
And say which grain will grow and which will not
Speak then to me…”
Shakespeare, Macbeth

In 1998 my Kansas City Legends 81/82 team played in the U17 Boys USYSA final four after winning the Region II Championship. The team contained one Canadian National Team player, a Region II midfielder and multiple State Select players from Kansas & Missouri. Three years previously I had promised my players and myself that I would play equal time on all my teams. As with all my teams, I had a stronger first 11 who, if played the majority of each game, would increase our chances of winning a National Championship. However, we had won the State and Regional Championship by playing our players equally and, as a group, the players and I decided to adhere to the fair playing time policy in the Final Four. We finished third in the nation that year and I’m convinced that had we played our best players for most of the games we would probably have won the National Championship. However, two of the players who would have seen little field time in a “best players play more” format were first recruited by their colleges at that final four. Three years later the majority of those players beat the Region IV Champions from California 8-3 in the U20 Final Four on their way to winning the National Championship. All but one of the U17 Legends squad played college soccer under scholarship and a few of them are still playing professionally. It would have been nice to win that National Championship at U17 but at what cost? Almost certainly to the detriment of the two recruited by their colleges at the National Finals. Interestingly, none of the stronger players felt that the equal playing time policy worked against them.

It takes tremendous courage to commit to an equal playing time approach in every game. Yet this is the only way to ensure that both your better and weaker players learn the right lessons for life from their youth soccer career. The weaker players learn they are valued by you and will take greater risks with the ball in the knowledge that they won’t be punished with reduced minutes. Often the weaker players on your squad, (who may have dropped out of soccer because of reduced playing time on other teams), will become your stronger players as they mature because of your fairness and support for costly creative risks while they are learning. By playing all players evenly you let everyone know that you believe in them and care only for their development, not the wins and losses for the gratification of your own ego. The stronger players, (who would get more playing time on any other team), learn the more valuable lesson that every child who is part of a team and makes a solid commitment, should be given equal opportunity to learn and develop. There’s plenty of time later in life for the “only the strong survive” approach. In all youth educational environments equality of educational opportunity is a child’s right. Taking away a young person’s chance to learn and grow because that player is not as effective at
that developmental stage sends the wrong message to both the better and the weaker players. The weaker players get the message that they’re not as valuable and, because they get less than fair playing time, the negative message and reduced minutes eventually guarantees their demise. Players receiving less time cannot feel as good as, or improve at the same pace as, those receiving more. In the meantime the stronger players learn the cynical attitude that it’s OK to cheat a teammate just so long as the team wins.

“What you risk reveals what you value.”
Jeanette Winterson - Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever.
Napoleon Bonaparte, (1769-1821)

There is an old “Axiom” (universal truth), that the vast majority of learning occurs in practice. In the Training Soccer Legends approach, as in most other traditional and non-traditional programs, the practice time is fair and equitable. However, our system takes it one step further and allocates playing time fairly in games because the negatives of being on the wrong end of reduced playing time are totally destructive to self-concept. Unequal playing time is a game phenomenon that has its roots and continued use in the ego based desire to win. The developmental argument for equal playing time is contradictory, cynical and specious (definition of specious is “having deceptive attraction or allure”).

I am of the opinion that all kids deserve equal opportunity for education. Any argument that uses development as the reason for extra playing time being allocated to the stronger player is actually an anti-developmental argument. I would encourage the readers of this book to see the unequal playing time proponents for who they are. These people are individuals who regard the win as more important than the self-concept of the bench sitter or non-starter. If we are honest with ourselves an unequal playing time policy isn’t about the development of the stronger player. It is about getting the statistical win on the board at the end of the game and the coach being able to walk away and beat his chest about the win. I didn’t always have a fair playing time approach to coaching. For many years I gave my better players more time when we played the tougher opponents. However, this policy only served as a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure for those players who didn’t start or received less playing time. They didn’t feel good about the way in which I perceived them and inevitably this began to shape how they felt about their abilities and general worth as soccer players. As they played less their self-concept, skills and tactical speed fell further behind those of the stronger players and my lack of support virtually guaranteed their eventual long-term failure.

I recently received an e-mail from Janelle Farabi whose son Corey was a team captain at Drake University NCAA Division 1 and was just selected for the MLS combine. Corey was one of those kids who lost the ball on a high percentage of possessions during his early teen years. He was smaller, weaker and slower than his teammates and matured later. During this frustrating period I gave Corey equal playing time, respect and attention and treated him as a valued member of my squad. He knew he was struggling. What he needed was support and third-party belief and encouragement, not the slow death of the bench warmer. In my program he got what he needed and the rest is positive history. I have coached many players like Corey and, because
they were given equal opportunity to play and had to fight that little bit harder than the stronger player just to survive, most ended up as better players than more gifted athletes with earlier maturity.

**Children Learn What They Live**

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.

If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.

If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.

If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.

If children live with ridicule, they learn to be shy.

If children live with jealousy, they learn to be envious.

If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.

If children live with tolerance, they learn to be patient.

If children live with encouragement, they learn to be confident.

If children live with praise, they learn to appreciate.

If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.

If children live with acceptance, they learn to find love in the world.

If children live with recognition, they learn to have a goal.

If children live with sharing, they learn to be generous.

If children live with honesty and fairness, they learn what truth and justice are.

If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and in those around them.

If children live with friendliness, they learn that the world is a nice place in which to live.

If children live with serenity, they learn to have peace of mind.

**With What Are Your Children Living?**
Chapter Forty-Nine

Why The Legends Way Optimizes Motivation

The most important part of a coaching philosophy is the person that believes in and uses it.

Possibly the most important role played by the soccer coach is that of motivator. The coach’s personality, convictions, goals and motivational techniques are of primary importance to the development of the attitudes of the players and to the degree of success they will achieve. Therefore, she needs to inspect her own theory of motivation and to examine her views of those qualities she thinks are important in developing a happy skillful team. These same motivational concepts will very likely become a dominant part of her team’s character simply because these are the things she will emphasize most strongly. Motivating the young soccer player involves far more than just yelling at him for greater effort or patting him on the back, far more than just encouraging him with praise or criticizing errors. It requires knowing what are the most important factors influencing motivational levels in young people and it requires knowing how to put this knowledge to good use. The best coaches know or sense, what is important in motivating young soccer players and they know what are the most important techniques for achieving this. They are optimistic about each player, the sport and the future potential of their players and team.

“The essence of optimism is that it takes no account of the present, but it is a source of inspiration, of vitality and hope where others have resigned; it enables a man to hold his head high, to claim the future for himself and not to abandon it to his enemy.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Several universal truths should be immediately evident to the soccer coach:

- Firstly, soccer players are motivated by the situation itself as well as by what lies within.
- Secondly, each player brings a unique personality to the soccer situation and interacts differently with various features of the situation to produce different behavior and results.
- Thirdly, each situation in soccer will involve different kinds of strong psychological stimuli and these will have a direct affect on how motivated a player is.
- Fourthly, the soccer coach is a part of the situation and as such, interacts with the player’s personality to influence the kinds of behavior he engages in.
- Finally, competitive sport is an extremely powerful psychological situation and because of this will be very influential in determining how a soccer player behaves.

Therefore, when it comes to motivating a player, the soccer coach must realize at the outset that his effort will always be partially dependent on exactly who that player is, the precise situation in which the motivating takes place and the sort of interaction that is operating between the person and the situation. For example, some players may be more motivated in competition than in training or practice, or vice versa. This is mostly due to the different manner in which each
unique player interacts with the variety of situations. It is not sufficient to just “know” your players or “know” the game of soccer. You must also “know” how they interact with each other. Each player is a different animal and each match a new challenge, therefore the coach must adjust with each new set of variables.

**Sources of Motivation in Soccer**

As an aid to the coach the major sources of motivation in the game of soccer are identified under the following headings:

1. **Enjoyment and play**: This is the primary impetus to activity of a non-survival nature and must be the major emphasis of any coaching program. John Huizinga (1949) defined play as, “Free activity standing quite consciously outside ordinary life as being non-serious but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest and no profit can be gained from it”.

   Enjoyment is central to the concept of play and must be seen as one of the major priorities of the proficient soccer coach. As a motivational factor there is possibly none greater than the enjoyment provided by the satisfaction of the play characteristic. Towards this end the coaching session for players between the ages of 3 & 12 should include soccer related games of a fun nature. The emphasis of these fun games should be primarily on amusement and pleasure. Should the young player be feeling any pressure in specific skill practices the fun game will help him relax and motivate him towards a more conducive attitude when the serious coaching is resumed. Furthermore, the adept coach will structure the developmental practices for maximum enjoyment on every occasion, thereby ensuring that the young player retains the skill benefit but learns that the outcome of the activity is not as severe as he feared. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach focuses on the two most fun skills of all team sports, i.e. dribbling and shooting. Because of this the motivation of the player is increased exponentially.

   “It is not enough to make someone learn, you must make them want to learn!”
   *Author Unknown*

   There is perhaps no practice less enjoyable than fitness training. With the “Training Soccer Legends” method it can be legitimately reasoned that players develop a much more specific and beneficial level of fitness, while enjoying the motivational benefits provided by working in the vastly more enjoyable situations that comprise the core of this philosophy. Therefore, it can be seen that by encouraging play and enjoyment the skilled soccer coach reduces the negatives involved with fear or dislike of the practice content and maximizes enjoyment based incentive, making it possible for greater intrinsic learning to occur.

   A young Brazilian sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, published a book in 1933 that championed playfulness and mischief as national Brazilian characteristics. In soccer terms the Brazilian took an orderly British game and turned it into a “dance of irrational
surprises”. In 1938 he wrote, “Our style of playing football contrasts with the Europeans because of a combination of qualities of surprise, malice, astuteness and agility, and at the same time playfulness, brilliance and individual spontaneity...Our passes...our dummies, our flourishes with the ball, the touch of dance and subversiveness that marks the Brazilian style...seem to show psychologists and sociologists in a very interesting way the roguery and the flamboyance of the Brazilian that today is in every true affirmation of what is Brazil.”

The following table suggests appropriate fun/learning/competition ratios:

- 3, 4 & 5 year olds - 80% fun with skill conditions and 20% pure technical learning
- 6 & 7 year olds - 60% fun with skill conditions and 40% pure learning/competition
- 8 & 9 year olds - 40% fun with skill conditions and 60% pure learning/competition
- 10 & 11 year olds - 30% fun with skill conditions and 70% pure learning/competition
- 12 & 13 year olds - 20% fun with skill conditions and 80% pure learning/competition
- 14 & 15 year olds - 10% fun with skill conditions and 90% pure learning/competition
- 16 and above - 100% pure learning/competition

“If we enjoy what we do, we will be successful. If we do not enjoy what we do, we will not be successful. Our success in any occupation depends upon enjoyment. Loving our work makes the difference. He who finds joy in his work, has found success at last”.

Author unknown

2. **Movement:** This is perhaps the single major component of a young person’s existence therefore it holds a leading position in the ladder of soccer coaching priorities. Although the majority of motivating factors influencing an individual to participate are learned, one of the foremost conditions that drives a person to physical activity and which directs his interests to the acquisition of physical skill is unlearned, i.e. the need for a certain amount of muscular exercise. The human being derives pleasure from muscular activity because the young body reacts favorably to dynamic exercise. This kinesthetic sensation is a muscular force that has been called muscular sensuousness. The goal here is the immediate one of enjoying movement for movement’s sake. Therefore, simple participation in movement activity provides intrinsic motivation and what the individual does or learns is a by-product of the desire to engage in the activity for its movement satisfaction and rewards.

The “Training Soccer Legends” coaching philosophy satisfies this need for activity by keeping the training session as dynamic as possible. In the technical training phase the optimum use of movement can be achieved by keeping any demonstration and verbal instruction brief, before allowing the players to attempt the skill. Once the players are attempting the skill the coach should deal with individual technical faults on a one-to-one basis so that the rest of the group can enjoy the motivational benefits of a dynamic practice.
In the 1 v 1 stage the motivation provided by movement is maximal because the nature of the 1 v 1 game demands more from the body than any other drill or fitness exercise. Because of this the coach who uses 1 v 1 as a core exercise in the curriculum, will maximize the motivational benefits provided by dynamic movement.

In 2 v 2, the final stage of this unique philosophy, the physical demands are only slightly reduced from the 1 v 1 stage of the curriculum but still extensive and challenging. Therefore, the players enjoy the maximum degree of motivation provided by the sheer exuberance of dynamic movement.

Throughout all three stages of the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum the motivational benefits involved with optimum dynamic movement are maximized.

“Change means movement. Movement means friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without that abrasive friction of conflict.”
Saul Alinsky

3. **Desire for distinction, success and achievement:** Any soccer player not achieving a measure of distinction and success, (either intrinsic or extrinsic), will soon fulfill the need to prove himself by turning to alternative pursuits.

“The mainspring of creativity appears to be the same tendency which we discover so deeply as the curative force in psychotherapy, man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities. By this I mean the organic and human life, the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature - the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self.”
Carl Rogers

The need to achieve is specific to each activity and situation. Furthermore, the level of this need influences risk taking, the sustenance of practice and momentary performance. Many people need to prove themselves and feel they are as good as or better than others. This need for power has been called the mastery or self-assertion motive and the coach should note that the satisfaction of this need is best obtained in highly competitive situations. Towards this end the coach will:

- First structure the early practices so that the success rate is extremely high. This initial total success experience will reinforce competency and result in further pursuit of excellence.
- Secondly, the coach will encourage the individual to set goals that are within reach but not too easily attainable.
- Thirdly, the young player should always be given some measure of effectiveness, (knowledge of results).
• Fourthly, when the goal is reached the player should, for a short time, be allowed to get real pleasure from its attainment before a new goal is set.

From the above we can see that the coach should make every attempt to reinforce or encourage further skill acquisition. This should be backed up by a constant flow of information and expertise. Furthermore, thoughtful structuring of the environment, especially the practice and training situation, is necessary to ensure that every player in the team improves optimally in skill. This skill improvement will contribute significantly to both individual and team levels of motivation.

With all this in mind it should be recognized that the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy builds the distinction, success and achievement value beyond that of any other approach. If a player learns to beat opponents and score goals that player distinguishes himself from the masses that are only able to pass off the responsibility to others. With this feeling of personal power comes the self-belief that goes hand in hand with the success and achievement of becoming a ball wizard and goal scorer. Thus it can be seen that players trained with this method will benefit from this motivational source to a far greater degree than those educated with a mostly passing and team work focus.

4. Curiosity/Interest: This is an intrinsic motivating drive of immense power, especially in young players still exploring their capacities for improvement. The young person is stimulated to activity by either learned or unlearned internal inquisitiveness. As a result the good coach will utilize this facet of an individual’s personality to generate a healthy interest in the game of soccer with the aim being to channel curiosity towards the attainment of skill. With this in mind the coach should select a confident yet questioning approach, thereby eliciting a favorable response from the young soccer player curious as to his own capacities for improvement.

Not only will the desire for knowledge provide initial motivation it will also act as reinforcement because the novelty of positive achievement will encourage effort towards a player’s subsequent questions as to how much he is capable of achieving, i.e. “You’ve scored 5, can you make it 6 next time”.

However, it must be remembered that for some the ability to sustain curiosity is dependent upon the enjoyment of the activity itself. Towards this end it is advisable to structure all coaching sessions to contain a variety of challenges. This will provide the young player with novel curiosity incentives within varied skill areas, thus maximizing the value of this source of motivation.

Once again the “Training Soccer Legends” approach utilizes this source of motivation to the greatest degree because the dribbling and shooting focus involves the players in the “neuromuscular rocket science” skills of the game. These are the skills that define the great players of the sport. As such they are the ones that the player is most curious about and interested in. Deceptive dribbling and shooting are the two best skills to challenge the
player who is exploring his capacity for complicated movement. This philosophy also has an extremely diverse range of technical and tactical challenges to stimulate greater interest and curiosity as to further personal capacity to improve.

5. **Social approval:** This is a purely extrinsic reward for participation tied in with the distinction, success and achievement motive. Its value must not be underestimated. The expectations of a group whether family, associates, community or society, play a forceful role throughout the lifespan of a person. Although some people are less susceptible and conforming than others, social approval is a goal pursued by the majority. In any activity selection, the type of sport and level of participation can be traced to a variety of socio-cultural variables. Soccer is no exception.

Here the coach has an important role to play because it is more often than not his approval that is sought by the young soccer player. If he withholds that approval then the result might be the undesired one of de-motivation. If, however he demonstrates tremendous approval of appropriate effort and performance, motivation will be elevated significantly. Furthermore, the coach should endeavor to encourage the attendance of the family wherever possible because the involvement of close relatives will serve as an additional motivating factor. Extra stimulus toward participation is also provided by the social approval of the peer group and casual acquaintances. Here the player is admired for the simple reason that he is a member of the soccer team. Thus, in a society where sporting prowess is respected, even those outside the immediate soccer fraternity tend to extend greater social acceptance to the gifted player.

No player is more revered and socially approved of than the game winner. The highly skilled players developed by the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy will receive the greatest recognition. This approach trains the field generals and quarterbacks of soccer. In high school this type of player is the “go to” central striker or midfielder. The tremendous degree of social approval extended to the deceptive dribbler and goal scorer by a wide variety of family and societal contacts is a tremendous source of further motivation and application towards achieving higher aspirations.

6. **Influence of the coach/teacher example:** In the soccer environment the young player will learn from the coach in much the same way as he learns from his parents. Therefore, the coach must exhibit all the characteristics he expects from his players. Many coaches with different leadership styles, with a variety of communication and tactical methods have achieved success. Much of coaching success will depend on the quality of the player the coach has to work with. However, much of this success will depend on the “frame of reference” from which the coach is regarded by his players. This will dictate his ability to motivate them to adhere to training guidelines, perform to the best of their ability and produce the right attitude on game days. The coach should prepare carefully, appear at practice sessions promptly in the appropriate attire, and radiate confidence. His diction should be clear and concise and his directions, demonstrations and routine movements should be characterized by forcefulness and energy. The young player is inclined to
imitate the teacher, absorb his attitudes and his moods. Therefore, enthusiasm and belief in the player are perhaps the two most important attributes of the successful coach.

Because of the unique way the coach supports players in the high-risk, equal playing time, “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum, the player feels completely validated as a creative individual. Players coached in this manner are highly motivated because they realize that the coach is prepared to sacrifice statistical wins and absorb losses while encouraging his players to dare greatly in possession of the ball. Unlike more conventional and traditional coaching methods where the players are used to pursue the win, played accordingly and discouraged from taking any risks that might jeopardize the winning objective, the “Legends” approach maximizes the positive impact of the coach. This leads to elevated player enthusiasm for growth and development.

“It is a fine thing to establish one's own religion in one's heart, not to be dependent on tradition and second-hand ideas. Life will seem to you, later, not a lesser, but a greater thing.”
D. H. Lawrence

7. **Variety in practice:** Lethargy and boredom must be prevented at all costs as these are motivational and developmental barriers. Variety in practice will serve to stimulate interest in the coaching session. Without doubt there is a best way to run every practice. This depends greatly on a number of factors such as individual characteristics, the environment and the content chosen. The coach chooses the length and type of practice, thereby governing the skill acquisition of the young player. Here the key to motivation is the continuation with one aspect of the practice only while players are either improving, or at least maintaining, their standard of performance. As soon as the skill begins to break down it is important to introduce new challenges to regenerate interest in the activity. Often a simple change of opponent will suffice to regenerate player motivation.

The “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum incorporates varied technical challenges that gradually become more difficult as the sequential progression develops. Once a player progresses into the 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 stages the variety of game situations, permutations and potential solutions encountered are endless. Tremendous creative practice variety is built into the 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 program because of the myriad of developmental challenges inherent to the small-sided game environment. The plethora of constantly changing problems and solutions maximize motivation while maintaining the creative dribbling and finishing focus necessary to develop great players.

8. **Praise and encouragement:** Motivational efficiency will be improved through careful employment of verbal reward and exhortation. The young soccer player will react favorably to well-earned praise and positive encouragement. The “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum provides more opportunities to praise and encourage players than conventional curriculums. In the technical training phase of the program players have a ball each. In the 1 v 1 phase each player spends 50% of the time in possession. In the 2 v
2 stage 25% of each player’s time is spent on the ball. This gives the Legends coach infinitely more opportunity to offer the each player praise for positive performance, thereby elevating levels of performance and further motivation towards greater achievement.

9. **Appreciation of the value of activities:** As a player matures her ability to understand the principles of soccer training improves. This cognitive development should be exploited for motivational purposes. In traditional training programs players often have a tough time appreciating how the coaches’ methods are benefiting them as individuals. This is because many traditional coaching methods are designed purely to win the upcoming game and not to maximize individual abilities and expand personal horizons. In the “Training Soccer Legends” approach players are more motivated by the philosophy because it is obviously centered on their needs as individuals. Therefore, the value of the “Legends” training is perceived as far greater than that of coaches who value the win over developing uniquely skilled big playmakers.

10. **Competition:** This is an area with a high negative potential but a tremendous upside if utilized positively. Competition should be used carefully in early development and gradually increased as the young player matures. Tremendous creative skills can be forged in the fires of 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 competition. The “Training Soccer Legends” method matches players of similar abilities in 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 competition in such a way as to maximize the technical skill, tactical speed, fitness and mental toughness of all players. The structured “round robin” system of competition motivates players to constantly higher levels of personal performance.

11. **Fear:** This source of motivation should never be used. Fear is already present to a greater or lesser degree in all children. Great coaches, teachers and parents remove the fears that inhibit their children from risk and experimentation in safe training, game teaching and life environments. Poor mentors will create an environment of fear by threatening or punishing undesirable behaviors. Threatening and punishing is the quick fix, instant gratification way to get children to “toe the line” and to win in the short-term. However, this method of motivating destroys all the other positive relationship essentials such as love, respect and a child’s need to feel their role model is primarily concerned for their well-being. Getting aims and objectives achieved by coercion (threats and punishment) destroys self-determination and develops individuals that are incapable of making good, creative independent decisions. This motivational method results in children and players who are almost totally reliant on the parent or coach for direction. This autocratic, fear based coaching, teaching or parenting style will result in an environment that severely curtails originality and personal growth. The consequences of fear-based motivation are inevitably negative for individual development. This approach may result in short term statistical wins and instant gratification for the “adult in power” but will be very damaging to the self-concept, personal growth, initiative and individual creative skill development of the children involved.
Chapter Fifty

Fun – “The Essential Element”

Simply put, the young player loves to dribble and shoot. Give her a basketball hoop, a soccer goal or a hockey net and she will dribble and shoot for many a fun hour. Teach her the fakes, moves and finishing techniques that allow her to feel her skills constantly improving and the extra success will help her to love the sport. Dribbling and shooting are the most enjoyable skills. Until approximately age twelve when the "dawning of tactical awareness" occurs, children are very “me” oriented and will enjoy activities where they get to be the center of attention over and above those that relegate them to support roles. Passing and receiving relegate children to a less enjoyable support role, whereas dribbling and shooting gives them center stage and satisfies their inherent need for selfish gratification. The enjoyment of one's own fantastic individual skills leads to hours of absorbed play with the soccer ball. The greatest players ever, i.e. Pele, Cruyff & Maradona have well documented histories of love for long hours of play with the ball. Their enjoyment of ball contact taught them incredible skills and provided the basis for a greater range of tactical options than the next strata of famous players from their eras. Furthermore, as a natural result of long hours of dribbling, shooting, receiving, passing & heading, they also developed a high level of specific soccer fitness. The modern day coach should try to rekindle the kind of passion for the game these players exhibited when they were young. The number one motivational source at the early age is fun so practice should focus on dribbling and shooting, the two most enjoyable soccer skills. The coach should position practice goals very close together and expect each player to perform a fake prior to shooting or passing to encourage the maximal use of these skills. A tremendous love of the game will also be developed by limiting ball to player ratios. At the early developmental stages an emphasis on 1 v 1 is ideal. This is because every player is guaranteed significant time on the ball (50%). There are many fun dribbling and shooting games involving a ball each or between two. These games can be conditioned to require a fake at frequent intervals.

In this way practice can be structured to promote dribbling and finishing, thereby, maximizing fun and enjoyment. Conversely a heavy emphasis on “teamwork” i.e. passing and receiving will make practices less enjoyable for the young player.

*The creation of something new is not accomplished by the intellect but by the play instinct acting from inner necessity. The creative mind plays with the objects it loves.*

*Carl Jung*

**Burn Out and the “Training Soccer Legends” Advantage**

Burn out is the result of failing to give players enough fun and not satisfying the play characteristic. It occurs when the practice becomes work instead of fun. Most teams incorporate 20 minutes of running at the end of each practice to get the kids "fit". Unfortunately this type of
practice gets kids fit to run but not specifically fit for soccer. This is work and the kids hate it! Although dribbling and shooting is hard work and very physically taxing it is also play, therefore the kids enjoy these skills more than any others. This is why the two skills chosen in free play outside of the structured practice environment are, most often, dribbling and shooting. These two skills combine everything that kids love about sports. Kids love to score and to create scoring opportunities. They want the ball and they enjoy the challenge of matching up with an opponent and testing their capabilities against others.

“Evidently, there is something irrepressible about the urge to dribble a soccer ball. It is deeply embedded in the game, an absolutely fundamental element. While it may be stretching things too far to say that soccer is dribbling, the skill is certainly at the heart of the sport. Soccer is not soccer without it. Dribbling is the most intricate, the most exciting, the most wondrous of soccer’s skills. It is the creative player’s chance to express himself, to add his own touches and flourishes, to inject his own personality into the game. You can see that it is a highly enjoyable skill, both for the dribbler and for the spectators. And it is the most intimate, the most personal of the sport’s skills. Dribbling is the body language of soccer, and inevitably no two players dribble alike.”

Paul Garner – Soccer Talk

One of the great benefits of the way in which the “Training Soccer Legends” program works is that it increases player satisfaction and retention ratios to a degree previously unheard of in premier team sports. The other great “burn-out” advantage is that it creates the very special player who is capable of winning games with a big play. This type of player enjoys such a boost to self-concept that the chance of burn out is reduced dramatically. It is hard not to love a sport and feel good about yourself when you are individually much more skillful than the opposition. It is easy to love soccer and make an extraordinary practice commitment when you are outstanding and capable of making the big plays that win games. The high self-concept that the “Training Soccer Legends” program develops helps the kids fall in love with soccer. The end result is an almost complete avoidance of the burn out syndrome that occurs in programs that focus on more mundane, less enjoyable and less self-actualizing aspects of soccer, such as passing and running.
Chapter Fifty-One

Jack Of All Trades Master Of None

Most coaches switch from learning one skill to another skill either within practice or from one practice to the next. This approach bestows a little knowledge of a lot of things at a low level. However, when learning the most creative and difficult neuromuscular skills needed for deceptive dribbling and finishing, the importance of recognizing the efficiency of “Massed and Concentrated Block” practice versus “Distributed and Varied Skill” practice cannot be underestimated. Concentrated Block versus Varied Skill refers to sticking with one skill for a number of practices versus jumping around from skill to skill.

When learning the complicated movement patterns inherent within moves to beat an opponent, it is important that the distinct parts of each move are broken down and performed separately until they can be performed with great technical efficiency. These components should then be combined one by one until the whole movement can be performed seamlessly. All else being equal, as in the attempt to learn a totally new and unfamiliar move, it is best to start out with massed practice and stick to the one skill for the whole practice session. Then as the move starts to become reasonably familiar, gradually switch to a more distributed, or broken up, practice approach where a number of moves are refined within the same practice.

Soccer has six basic field skill areas as follows:
- Dribbling
- Shooting
- Passing
- Receiving
- Tackling
- Heading.

Accepted coaching philosophy is to teach these six skills successively with each practice dedicated to a different skill. This is varied skill practice at its worst. Each time the player comes to practice he is beset with a completely new set of movement patterns before he has come close to mastering those worked on in the previous practice. By the time the skill worked upon in the last practice comes around again six practices later, he has lost all but a small residue of the neuromuscular skill acquisition pattern learned during the previous performance of that particular skill and has regressed to a point only slightly higher than the first time the skill was worked on. The “Concentrated Block” approach will focus on one skill area for a number of weeks. In each practice the player builds rapidly on the movement pattern acquired in the one before. Through years of experimentation I have found that 8 to 12 weeks of concentration upon one skill area i.e. dribbling or shooting, favors maximal skill acquisition.
Graphical illustration of the Concentrated Block benefit versus the Varied Skill approach to coaching a Soccer skill

Please note the vertical scale of 0-60 represent units of skill acquisition.

It can be noted that in “Concentrated Block” practice there is far greater growth in the acquisition of technical ability between practices when compared with the “Varied Skill” method. This creates a much more positive and consistent upward neuromuscular skill acquisition growth curve.

The bonus to the “Concentrated Block” method of learning is that once we learn a physical skill to a high degree of competency we retain it better than we do other kinds of learning. “It’ll come back to you, it’s like riding a bicycle”, we say of long unused skill. This is because neuromuscular learning causes a different sort of physiological change than other kinds of learning and, when we recall a motor skill, we “bring it back” from some other place, by some other mechanism. As motor skills are learned, they seem to require less and less conscious thought. Indeed conscious thought can become a negative hindrance to performance. This seems to fly in the face of accepted coaching methodology. Accepted methods encourage players to concentrate harder, keep conscious control, pay attention, supervise every detail and make more effort. However, great skill acquisition is marked by learning the movement pattern until it is thoughtlessly and effortlessly executed at full speed. Much in the same way that we have a short, mid and long-term psychological memory, we have a short, mid and long-term muscle memory. The job of the great coach is to arrange practice content to promote the quickest possible acquisition of the key dribbling and shooting skills. Adhering to the concentrated block practice method and utilizing massed versus distributed practice to the appropriate degree, will guarantee the quickest acquisition and long-term retention of, neuromuscular skill.
Chapter Fifty-Two

Win/Win, Win/Lose, Lose/Win, Lose/Lose

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self,
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to a mirror and look at yourself,
And see what that man has to say.

For it isn't your father or mother or wife,
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life,
Is the one staring back from the glass.

He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest.
For he's with you clear up to the end,
And you've passed the most dangerous, difficult test,
If the man in the glass is your friend.

You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years.
And get pats on the back as you pass,
But your final reward will be the heartaches and tears,
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

Author Unknown

Win/Win

The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is a Win/Win approach to teaching young players. It is the right thing to do because it is fair and ethical. The first and foremost priorities of the youth mentor are impeccable ethical and moral standards. The great coach will be able to look in the mirror each and every night and be able to say that regardless of wins & losses he did the right thing for each and every young player he came into contact with that day. This is the ultimate win/win approach to soccer coaching.

Win/win is where everyone benefits and the results are mutually beneficial and satisfying for all participants. Through this high-risk creative focus all Legends players are developed to the maximum of their technical, tactical, physical and mental potential in every practice. The relationship between the players and coach is also a win/win because although the coach may have to sacrifice statistical wins, the satisfaction of seeing the players achieve and grow as individuals is far more rewarding than the short-term victory achieved at the expense of less capable players.
“The best rewards come when you risk the most. Sometimes the risk is its own reward.”
Doogie Howser M.D.

Win/Lose
Most coaches have philosophies that lock players into rigid positional roles or give some players less playing time than others. Some coaches spend significant playing time on set plays that may never be used by any subsequent coach in their player’s career. These are just a few examples of approaches that are designed to increase the chance of winning the next game but, in doing so, serve to take away learning opportunities that can help players develop skills needed to compete at the highest levels. These coaches use their position, power, credentials and personality to get their way and want to boost their own “press” and ego by achieving the statistical win, albeit at the cost of their own players. They give recognition on a conditional basis and certain players feel valued while others feel relatively insignificant. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach avoids the win/lose by challenging all players equally and by focusing only on “in the clutch” aspects of the game in structured, even and fair competition environments. This guarantees that each player is developed, supported and challenged in an optimal manner.

Lose/Win
Some players at the low end of the team totem pole will develop a lose/win mindset as a result of sitting the bench, not starting and other more or less subtle messages from the coach. They have been beaten up on for so long that they have no or low personal standards, demands, expectations or vision. These players become appeasers who seek acceptance from popularity instead of respect. The coach wins because he puts his stronger players on the field to get a result while the bench sitting player loses because the foundations of a strong dynamic character are slowly whittled away by the constant abuses inherent within this widely accepted negative coaching methodology. The “Training Soccer Legends” method makes absolutely certain that each player rotates evenly from the bench and plays equal playing time, thereby guaranteeing that there is no coaching reason for any player to develop a lose/win “I’m a door mat” mentality. In all practices all players are shown equal attention, challenged with the most rewarding creative skill and tactical situations, plus matched up with players of reasonably equal ability. In this way self-concept is continually reinforced and built through successful performance and outcome.

Lose/Lose
Many coaches start out in a win/lose mode and, because of their short sightedness in their earlier relationship with players, find themselves in a lose/lose situation later. Coaches who pursue a win/lose approach will eventually lose the respect and loyalty of most of their players because it will be recognized that the coach is in it for himself not the young athlete. As a consequence the losing player will eventually rebel and adopt an antagonistic stance where he refuses to listen to the coach and in some instances actively undermines the coach. Dissatisfied players and their parents will spread their frustrations to the rest of the team at great cost to all concerned. Here everyone loses because the coach originally adopted a win/lose approach. Some coach/player/parent situations can degenerate to such a degree that the coach continually
punishes the player and the player and parents retaliate by attempting to organize team rebellion. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach works to avoid this situation by creating homogenous teams and guaranteeing equal and fair treatment within a coaching framework that is guaranteed to improve all players to a far greater degree than conventional methods.

**Important Quick Note:**

“There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of un-equals.”

*Kenneth Blanchard*

In the crucial area of self-concept fair and equal treatment is essential, however with regard to personal motivations, characteristics and individual needs, the coach must adapt to provide each player with what he or she specifically needs to maximize development. Being a fair coach will involve pursuing the win/win by allocating such things as playing time equally. Being a great coach will only be possible if individual differences are recognized and players have their unique needs addressed. Where the philosophy is a pure developmental win/win even the most hard-bitten, statistically oriented players and parents can usually be converted to see the benefits. This is because the win/win benefits completely outweigh the benefits of win/lose, lose/win & lose/lose for all concerned. Any benefits from the latter three are short-term, quick fix, instant gratification results. The benefit from the “Training Soccer Legends” win/win methodology involves central, long-term, core development that can be used throughout a soccer career and, more importantly, have a life-long positive impact on successful personality characteristics i.e. self-concept, risk taking, work ethic, fairness and respect.
Chapter Fifty-Three

Girls Trained the Legends Way Have More Opportunities

Females are different to males (big surprise that one!!). Girls are either genetically programmed or taught to be more nurturing, less aggressive, kinder, more caring and to have a greater degree of empathy. It is probably a combination of the mothering instinct and societal training that creates this accepted psychological trend in females. This sharing, caring characteristic makes girls more inclined to adopt a "team approach" to soccer and give the ball away very quickly to a teammate without dwelling upon or "hogging it". Boys on the other hand are either genetically programmed or nurtured to take greater risks, be aggressive and "go for it". They are less likely to exhibit empathy or caring and more likely to be selfish about possessions including a greater natural soccer propensity to "hog the ball". This "hunter/gatherer" instinct and training makes boys more likely to take risks and step outside of their comfort zone. Consequently, because the Legends club succeeds in training girls to be more like the boys, i.e. to hold the ball, beat players and score great goals, our female players stand out to an even greater relative degree than the illustrious list of Legends male graduates. Furthermore as a group, girls are more responsible. This means that they are more likely to complete assigned tasks. We assign all our players daily dribbling fakes and shooting homework. Girls take this responsibility seriously and follow through with the set schedule of homework more often than boys. Consequently the girls attain greater relative technical proficiency at the more advanced skills and demonstrate more effective deceptive dribbling and finishing technique relative to opponents trained by more traditional coaches. This leads to greater effective domination over opponents than exhibited by boys. However, in both males and females the relative degree of deceptive dribbling and team finishing demonstrated by Legends trained players is significantly greater and more effective than players from opposing teams. Because Legends trained girls demonstrate a far greater comparative positive skill advantage over their opponents than the boys, it leads me to hypothesize that the female half of the Legends program will eventually graduate a greater percentage of players into college scholarships than has historically been the case with the male side of the Legends club.

Another societal trend that limits girls on other teams but works in favor of females in the Legends program, is that girls are expected to conform to program norms more than boys. Within the Legends club this urge to conform is satisfied in the most creative manner. In other programs conforming means sharing the ball by passing quickly. Conversely, and to the greater advantage of girls, conforming in the Legends club means developing incredible dribbling and finishing skills as a group. In the “Training Soccer Legends” approach the curriculum emphasis on great individualism nullifies the traditional detrimental pressure of the more traditional team to be unselfish. The negative peer pressure to share or give the ball away quickly on conventional teams is one of the most damaging and detrimental influences on the ability of players to take the responsibility to make the “big play”. In traditionally coached soccer
programs this peer pressure and “hot potato” passing emphasis, retards or prevents the development of individualism, thereby limiting the altitude to which a player will rise within the sport.

Anson Dorrance, the Head Coach of eighteen time NCAA Division One Champions North Carolina, wrote the following in his fantastic book “Training Soccer Champions”:

“I remember when I went to recruit Stephanie Zeh. She is one of the greatest players I have ever coached, but her career was cut short because she had her ACL cut in half in an NCAA semi-final game against Central Florida. When we went to recruit her, all the parents knew that North Carolina was coming up to scout Stephanie Zeh. I’m on the sidelines walking through all these parents, and all of them are telling me the same thing, “Coach, I don’t know if you want her. She’s not a team player. She just dribbles the ball.” The more I heard this, the more excited I got. I initially went up there with a small scholarship offer. By the time all the parents had told me I didn’t want her, I was considering giving her a full ride. She had angered so many people because she took players on constantly. Imagine the strength this seventeen-year-old girl had to have to keep taking people on when everyone hated her for doing it.

Imagine the strength this young girl had to have to maintain the confidence and soccer arrogance to keep dribbling in the midst of all this unbelievable criticism from her teammates and all their parents, and probably coaches, too. She had to be unbelievably powerful if I’m standing on the sideline and the parents are telling me not to recruit her. I’m thinking, this girl has got to be a psychological rock to thrive in this environment. Can you imagine the number of girls who don’t have that kind of strength, but have Stephanie’s talent? They could become wonderful take-on artists, but under the barrage of constant criticism - “You’re not a team player; you won’t pass to my daughter; why don’t you pass to me; you’re incredibly selfish” - they finally collapse and become these passing players who are a dime a dozen. Sometimes in their desire to create wonderful human beings and unselfish children, parents sacrifice the quality that makes soccer players great. Yes, I think it’s wonderful that their daughter’s a team player and bends over backwards for everyone and is real sweet and cooperative and is always looking for a pass before shooting. I’m sure she’s a real sweet girl. But that girl’s not going to help me win championships.”

That quote says it all. To be great you have to become a great individual in a team sport. It takes guts, dedication, strength of commitment, resistance to criticism and great confidence to take players on and go for goal. It’s no surprise that other programs discourage this methodology. As a consequence few of their players develop tremendous deceptive dribbling and ball striking capabilities into adulthood.

At the time of writing this book all the K.C. Legends scholarship success has been achieved on the boy’s side of the program, which is the more difficult arena in which to obtain scholarships. However, the future for the girls is bright because due to Title 9 Gender Equity provisions, scholarships for girls are more plentiful than those for boys. These days there are significantly more female college soccer programs. Furthermore, female NCAA soccer programs are allowed
to give 14 full ride scholarships as opposed to 9.9 full rides in male programs. Additionally, team participation ratios at showcase tournaments show that, due to a greater incidence of female player drop out and other societal factors, there is nearly double the ratio of males to females competing for soccer scholarships. Therefore, because there are more female programs, more female scholarships and less competing female players, the opportunity for a woman to get a scholarship is 5 or 6 times greater than for a man.

From a purely statistical perspective girls have a far greater chance of getting a college scholarship than boys. However, the great news is that the Legends methods of training players utilizes the female versus male genetic/societal factors to considerably strengthen the odds of Legends trained female players getting a scholarship over female graduates from traditionally coached clubs.

In the Legends club we train our players to be 1 v 1 warriors long before we focus them on becoming great team players. The guaranteed result of this "high risk" emphasis is the eventual ability to make the "Big Play" and impress college coaches at age 17. Consequently the ability of the Legends trained player will be significantly greater than that of players trained primarily in the passing approach to soccer. Other clubs claim their approach to be "well rounded" and yet our players end up being better passers and team players at high school graduation. This is because we spend a far greater amount of time developing shooting skills than other programs, and because a great shot is by far the hardest of all passes under the greatest physical and psychological pressure. Consequently Legends trained players find difficult passes relatively easy. Furthermore, training the more difficult neuro-muscular components of deceptive dribbling simultaneously builds the easier neuro-muscular components of receiving under pressure.

College coaches recruit the big playmakers wherever possible. The best of all playmakers can both create and score their own goals. The girls we train have the ability to both create and score goals, thereby making bigger and better plays than their opponents. This will enable them to get better scholarships than players developed by other clubs, (as is historically the case with our boys program). Consequently by comparison, players from other traditional clubs will look relatively less attractive to the college coach and the success of Legends trained female players will eclipse that of other programs.

More great news for Kansas City Legends trained female soccer players

Some very interesting statistics from youth soccer involve the NCAA Division One scholarship situation for girls as opposed to boys in this region of the country.

The number of NCAA Division One College Programs for girls in States surrounding Kansas City, (KS, MO, IA, NE, CO, AR, OK, TX, LA, TN, KY, IL, WI, MN, SD, IN), outnumber boys programs 84 to 33.
This means that the Division One opportunities for KC based girls players when assessed on this statistic alone are two and a half times greater for girls than for boys.

Add to this the fact that each women’s program has 14 full rides to allocate as opposed to 9.9 for men there is an additional 20% plus chance of a women’s scholarship from this difference alone. Then factor in that there are approximately 66% men versus 33% women vying for scholarships as juniors and seniors (based on boys versus girl’s team attendance at College showcases) and KC women’s chances of a division one scholarship double again.

From the above we can see that Kansas City Legends’ female players are statistically between five and six times as likely to get a similar NCAA dollar scholarship amount than Kansas City Legends male players who have historically been very successful in this area.

When the collegiate success of our male graduates is compared to that of any other club from KC over the last five years, the Legends club has produced many more male NCAA Division One players than the competition. This is because the unique concentration on creative individual skills and attacking tactics involved in the Legends program makes players more attractive to the practiced eye of the college coach. Factor in this with the unique methodology of the Legends club and the chances for a Kansas City Legend girls player to get a college scholarship are statistically 6 times greater than for past male graduates from the Legends program and many more times greater than female players trained in the traditional “get it give it” approach.
Chapter Fifty-Four

Using Conditions to Program
Intuitive Creative Responses

Conditions are coaching demands designed to make the player respond appropriately and automatically to game cues and situations. An example of a condition would be to ask a player to perform a fake on every possession so that later in his career he is able to use an immediate fake to create space when a shot or pass isn’t available to him. When the successful performance of a condition is either rewarded, or the non-performance of a condition is punished, the players will learn to respond automatically in the required manner. This process is called “operant conditioning”. A player who performs the correct automatic response has been “operant conditioned”. Successful operant conditioning is the result of very well explained and demonstrated expectations from the coach and long-term consistent reward, or denial of reward, attached to the successful performance of the goal. The Legends coach is a great engineer who designs and builds a first class system to:

- Teach the most important skills
- Develop coping and adjusting behaviors
- Stimulate a philosophy of intelligent risk
- Provide the opportunity for individuals to realize their maximum potential

The good coach will look first at the system components. These are technical, (neuromuscular execution of skill), tactical (understanding, recognition and option selection within personal technical limits), physiological (e.g. aerobic, anaerobic, agility strength and flexibility) and psychological (e.g. self concept, motivation, focus, mental toughness, endurance). The tactical will have little or no influence during the early years of development. The great players have always been those who caught fire when they were young and spent extensive time grooving their skills. Success in soccer is built around technical brilliance and self-confidence. This is developed by demanding that the player attempt to play with an outstanding attitude towards dribbling and finishing. Conditioned games are the backbone of development and mirror the sporting upbringing of great athletes in other sports, such as Magic Johnson, brought up on the playgrounds of Lansing, Michigan with games of 1 v 1, 2 v 2 & 3 V 3, winner stays on basketball. These games were all played under the basket, in the key and in the clutch. Here, in many hours of practice and play for the love of the game, is where Magic Johnson’s phenomenal techniques were tested, refined and developed. In small-sided soccer games is where the fitness base sown during lonely hours of ball work is expanded. Here is where much of mature tactical awareness occurs and the psychological strength of the athlete grows or festers. Operant conditions should be imposed sequentially depending upon the developmental stage and maturity of the player concerned. However, there are general rules that must be adhered to if the conditions are going to maximize developmental potential.
The Conditions Must:

1. **Always promote the most creative and difficult solution.** Great players make great plays. Attempting the great play develops a great player. Great plays are the most difficult and most creative. By teaching your players to "Go for it" and attempt the hardest skill or low percentage play with the highest difficulty factor, you teach them to welcome each mistake or failed technique as a friend and stepping stone to eventual success.

   *Why not go out on a limb--isn't that where the fruit is?*
   *Frank Scully*

2. **Encourage optimal speed of play.** Superstars make quick decisions and execute difficult skills with lightning speed. A “greater speed of play” coaching emphasis will result in a greater skill failure at the early stages of development but eventually reaps dividends in successful skill performance during the later stages.

3. **First mandate deceptive dribbling and shooting only.** Later allow all technical skills to be an option or solution to the problem. As players mature they must be forced to analyze all available technical and tactical solutions to their problems. Many coaches make the mistake of conditioning only one type of response i.e. two touch passing. This may be acceptable in very limited doses but fatal in large measures. Good coaches first expect their players to attempt the most creative technical solutions, (dribbling and shooting), and progress to include the most creative passing game. They rarely restrict the creative options of their players. This is because great coaches understand that playing one style of offensive game makes their team predictable. Conversely, encouraging rapidly changing and varied responses at speed never allows the defense to settle or anticipate the method, place or pace of attack.

   "*You can be sure of succeeding in your attacks if you only attack places that are undefended. *"
   *Sun Tzu, (The Art of War)*

4. **Prioritize the use of skills to reflect ball possession in front of the opponent's goal.** The coach will encourage his players to:
   - Shoot first if the opportunity presents itself
   - B or C) Pass to the open man if the opportunity to shoot is not on
   - C or B) Dribble explosively to create the shot or the pass.
   In all three instances the chosen skill should ideally be disguised as one of the other two if maximum effectiveness is to be achieved.

5. **Select drills that allow players to be successful in their efforts more than 50% of the time.** The conditions imposed on less adept or mature players should be relatively easy to perform successfully. A good general rule of thumb is that any condition should allow players to be more rather than less successful. If conditions are causing breakdowns in
6. **Present enough variables that the situation demands total concentration for success to occur.** Success in soccer is situational by nature. The greatest pressure in soccer is found in the opponent's penalty area where the highest concentration of defenders, the least space, minimum time and elevated consequence of failure all conspire to provide the greatest number of problems to solve. Total focus is a learned characteristic. The ability to block out extraneous stimuli and assimilate only the necessary variables before arriving at the correct option selection decision, will only occur if the coach makes each and every practice as busy, confusing, crowded and dynamic as possible. The degree of difficulty should take into account the need to ensure that the players are more successful than unsuccessful in their efforts.

7. **Create crowded areas needing great focus, agility and coordination.** Many coaches provide large, almost characterless voids for their players to practice in. Four v four games are often played in fifty-yard squares where each player has too much space to operate in. There is a failure on the part of these coaches to recognize that great plays occur in the clutch. This is where only those players who are able to solve the most confusing problems created by this crazy version of human pinball will survive, let alone excel. Players trained by such coaches have no answers when, in the face of rapidly converging defensive pressure, only a lightning fast deceptive solution will create the scoring opportunity.

8. **Consistently present greater challenges than those encountered in the full game.** The greatest challenges in the full game are found in crowded offensive areas of the field where defense outnumbers attack, combined with extremely high pressure on the ball carrier. This occurs most often in and around the opponent's penalty area. In practice situations greater pressure can be created where 18 or more players, (including 2 goalies), are participating in four games of 2 v 2 on a 25 x 25 yard field with goals at each end. Here, the game is total offense/defense. Two attackers have to team up to find a way past two defenders plus twelve more players who all present problems to the team in possession. When counting the opposing goalkeeper, this effectively turns a 2 v 2 into a crowded and complicated 2 v 15. In this way the challenge presented is significantly more difficult than that encountered in the 11 v 11 game, where a player has more space, additional time and as many as 10 helpers trying to aid progress.

9. **Take into account the developmental level and maturity of the players.** The good coach will always analyze the capabilities of the players prior to selecting the level of challenge needed to elicit maximal development. If the original practice conditions are too easy or conversely too difficult, the good coach will adapt to create optimal learning conditions.
10. **Allow for frequent statistical recording.** Good coaches make use of statistical recording systems to provide objective feedback about and to their players, to motivate players towards greater effort, to provide practices with beneficial structure and fair variety of opposition. Statistical systems go some way towards overcoming the natural human tendency to appreciate certain players more than others because of complimentary characteristics. The knowledge that scores will be recorded from every match up makes for greater player effort and application. This is due to the knowledge that there will be a consequence for both good and bad performances. Statistical systems help provide a fairer variety of opposition as opposed to random unstructured selection of opposition match ups. Random opponent selection can pit weak versus strong in unfair proportion.

11. **Reward forethought.** Great players must decide on a course of action prior to receiving the ball. The condition of one touch forces the receiver to think ahead, know his options and select a solution from the available choices. However, this condition excludes the option of dribbling or two touch passing where appropriate. A more viable condition would be one or two touch release, (shot or pass), or a fake within two touches. This excludes none of the technical options yet encourages the receiver to think ahead and "have a plan" prior to the first contact with the ball.

12. **Avoid using props that discourage visual and verbal communication.** E.g. don’t use bibs. Differentiating between players by using colored shirts or bibs discourages two essential forms of communication i.e. visual and verbal. The glimpse of a friendly shirt may cause a player to play the ball in that direction with no awareness of his teammates' readiness to receive the ball. With a crowded practice area and no differentiation of color, the ball carrier is forced to make eye contact more regularly and teammates off the ball are forced to call out instructions to the ball carrier. These are both important habits to cultivate if players are to achieve their full potential.

13. **Generate correct responses immediately following technical actions.** For example: When a player passes the ball he should immediately explode to support his pass. A condition used to make this response habitual would be the loss of possession for any player not making a full pace run to a new position immediately after releasing the ball, (including following a shot on goal). This process can be expanded to penalize all players not involved in the immediate play if they don’t change position at pace following every pass made by a teammate.

**Important Quick Note:** Conditions are vital if the correct attitudes and responses are to become habitual. Such conditions as itemized above can be incredibly effective in developing the quality of quick thinking creative genius so important to successful and entertaining soccer. This is especially true when the intelligent use of conditions is married with a positive, enthusiastic philosophy centered in the intelligent use of praise, admiration, respect and encouragement.
Chapter Fifty-Five

The “Hot Potato” Coach

This is the coach who splits time between all the various skills of the game, doesn’t demand a move before passing and, therefore, develops players who choose to get rid of the ball quickly every time they receive it because it is easy to give away the responsibility and pass the pressure to someone else. This type of coach may teach players to be very good passers when their teammates make themselves available for the pass, but they never develop players who are supremely confident on the ball and able to create opportunities even when their teammates are not showing for the ball.

Unfortunately for the “passing player” the first few moments of individual possession rarely present an excellent opportunity to play a penetrating pass to a teammate. Furthermore, the higher the level of play the rarer the ideal attacking third passing opportunity becomes. This is because defenders are more proficient at marking tight and denying the penetrating pass opportunity. A tight defense necessitates a greater ability to hold the ball with deception under pressure until the passing or shooting opportunity presents itself, or ideally until the ball carrier can create that opportunity with the deceptive dribble.

The Developmental Inequities of Splitting the Coaching Focus Between Dribbling, Finishing and the Other Skills of the Game

The degree to which the coach dilutes the 100% dribbling and finishing emphasis will bear absolutely no resemblance to the damage that will occur to the player’s ability and willingness to attempt, and eventually be successful in, dribbling and finishing skills. If a coach splits his focus between the most creative, deceptive skills, i.e. shooting and dribbling with deception in front of goal, and the “team skills”, i.e. passing and receiving, the ratio of use in the game situation will not reflect the 50-50 split in emphasis. The devastating truth is that when this occurs passing or “team” skills will be chosen above dribbling or “individual skills” almost every time. This is because the psychological strength and maturity demanded of the player when attempting to dribble under pressure are many fold greater that that needed to pass the ball and the responsibility to a teammate.

The damage done to dribbling and finishing by dividing time between the “creative individual” focus and the “team” focus is completely out of proportion with the percentage allocation of training time to each skill.
Further Restrictions on Dribbling Occur in the Game Situation

Dilution of creativity in the dribble usually becomes even greater in the game situation because most coaches discourage deceptive dribbling in their defensive half, thereby limiting a player’s creative dribbling development to 50% of the game at most. This problem is compounded because most coaches only sanction unusually talented players to dribble deceptively and even then only in certain situations.

If the deceptive dribbling skills of all young players are to be optimized the coach must demand their usage by every player, in every area of the field, in every situation before the right to make a pass is earned. Only then will the player be focused correctly on the development of supreme comfort and deception with the ball prior to the exercising of the team option. Eventually when all players have reached a level of proficiency where they are capable and confident in dribbling and finishing situations, under extreme pressure, at the higher echelons of their age group, will the priorities be changed from the “fake first” approach to prioritizing the penetrating pass. Even then the coach will return to fake first whenever he sees his players foregoing good dribbling opportunities in favor of a potentially less effective pass.

**Important Quick Note:** As a coach it is your responsibility to make sure that your players develop the ability and confidence to take opponents on in front of goal and score. Psychologically and physiologically these are the most difficult skills of the game, therefore they must be emphasized above all others until their effective performance in all situations is automatic. Then, and only then, should we teach players to look for the pass prior to exercising the option to dribble deceptively.

The greatest objection to this “deceptive dribble first” approach will be the detrimental effect on the player’s ability to make the technically perfect pass. However, under this philosophy the coach will spend 50% of training time teaching shooting techniques involving more advanced but similar neuromuscular actions as passing. This “shooting not passing” approach develops tremendous finishing ability and, because the best finishers are so adept at handling defensive pressure and striking the ball with correct power, weight and accuracy, players trained this way will automatically become excellent passers.
Chapter Fifty-Six

Training One Exceptional Foot Or Two Good Ones

“We must make wake up to the fact that athletics is not, nor ever can be perfected: there will always be more to learn.”
Arthur “Greatheart” Newton – Legendary long distance runner (1949)

The problem with knowing which technique to coach is that there are too many diverse skills in soccer. Therefore, it is impossible to teach every technique to a high degree of functional brilliance in the limited time available. As in other areas of life where “Peter has to be robbed to pay Paul”, there are practice time limitations. As a consequence, for true brilliance to be attained, the great coach must concentrate on limiting the technical focus to only those areas that will produce maximum results.

Traditional coaching practice advocates using both feet for all shooting, passing and dribbling drills. Certainly, given the luxury of adequate time in an ideal world, all coaches would love to develop every one of their players into two footed geniuses. However, the reality is that there just isn’t enough time to train all of soccer’s techniques to perfection. This creates a need for the coach to be incredibly selective in the skills taught and the drills used.

“The jack of all trades seldom is good at any. Concentrate all of your efforts on one definite chief aim.”
Napoleon Hill

Many coaches will attempt to teach their players everything. They want their team to exhibit great dribbling, passing, shooting, heading, receiving and tackling skills. However, in each of these technical areas there are very many different ways to perform these skills and far too little time to learn each unique technique to an elite level of individual brilliance. Because of the sheer number and variations of techniques in soccer it takes far too long to learn all of the game’s skills to a high level of consistency and expertise. This is especially evident because the body parts involved include all surfaces of the feet, thighs, chest and head in a multitude of diverse and unique ways.

When the large number, range and variation of skills needing to be mastered are analyzed, there simply isn’t enough time available to teach the highest level of technique, in all facets of the game, with all parts of the body.

Furthermore, all truly great coaching involves a specific focus on only those skills that most determine a player’s ability to rise to the very highest level.
The “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum clearly identifies deceptive dribbling and devastating shooting as the two unique and vital skills that all the very greatest of players must have in their repertoire. The vast majority of truly great players also shared one common characteristic, all had one incredibly good foot that they used almost exclusively when performing the most difficult dribbling and finishing techniques.

“Gather in your resources, rally all your faculties, marshal all your energies and focus all your capacities upon mastery of at least one field of endeavor.”

John Haggai

Pele & George Best were right-footed ball wizards but their left was for standing on. Thierry Henry has a great right foot but his left is average. Eric Cantona was almost completely right footed but what an incredible right foot it was!! Diego Maradona did virtually everything with his left but there has probably never been a player who could do as much with one foot. The great Ferenc Puskas of Hungary had a wonderful left foot but no right. Christiano Ronaldo dribbles and shoots almost exclusively with his right foot. Ronaldinho is almost completely right footed but his right foot is worthy of global adulation. Roberto Baggio, arguably the most creative Italian player ever, was almost totally right-footed. The list goes on. Ronaldo, Robinho, Figo, Beckham and Rooney are almost exclusively right footed. Giggs, Rivaldo and Roberto Carlos are almost totally left-footed.

These players could, on occasion, use their weaker foot to make a simpler play. However, their big plays were almost exclusively made with the strong foot. After reviewing hundreds of fantastic goals and superb dribbling sequences performed by the world’s greatest players it has become apparent that the vast majority of the most creative and amazing plays are made with the strong foot.

Critics of a one-footed training approach will point to the missed opportunities that fall to the weak foot as evidence that the cost of not developing two good feet is greater than the benefit of focusing on making the strong foot exceptional. However, in review of extensive video footage it is categorically evident that players with one great foot find unique creative ways to use that foot to make the big play, however unorthodox their use of that foot may be. One extreme example of such creative improvisation comes from a game where Diego Maradona performed a Rivelino step over to beat the left full back on the right wing of the offense. After wrong footing the defender, instead of crossing the ball with his right foot, Maradona situated his right foot to the left of the ball and struck an inch perfect cross by scissoring his left foot behind his right foot to make contact with the ball. Diego Maradona’s fantastic Rivelino, followed by the unorthodox inch perfect cross, resulted in a perfect offensive heading opportunity from which a goal was scored. Furthermore, not once did Maradona touch the ball with his weak foot during the whole amazing sequence.

Further research indicates that the world’s greatest players perform moves that usually result in the ability to use their strong foot immediately upon exiting the fake. The move to exit on his weak foot by Maradona was a somewhat unusual occurrence because the majority of dribbling
moves performed by the greatest players result in a passing or shooting opportunity on their stronger foot. This realization creates the hypothesis that players will realize the greatest deceptive dribbling and goal-scoring success if they perform only those moves that will bring them out of pressure with an immediate strong foot passing or shooting opportunity. If true, this observation reduces the number of deceptive dribbling skills to be learned by half. This is because a coach who previously taught deceptive dribbling fakes in both directions need now only teach that skill to exit on the strong foot. The realization that exiting the fake to the weaker foot will negate much of the benefit of the move, should encourage a focus on learning and perfecting each move in only the direction that exits to the more effective stronger foot. Doubling the number of specific moves in one direction will also result in double the number of strong-footed passes and shots. The narrowing of the focus to performing twice the repetitions of half the moves and shots, will double the permanent learning factor and efficiency of such actions, thereby maximizing the acquisition of creative technical skill and legendary brilliance.

Successfully identifying and spending more time on perfecting soccer’s technical and tactical priorities has tremendous parallels in everyday life where it is the individual who is most able to prioritize daily tasks effectively who enjoys the greatest success.

The following story illustrates how important it is to focus on key areas in a very memorable way:

“The Mayonnaise Jar”

“Professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, wordlessly, he picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

So the professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook! The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar.

Of course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous "yes."

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

"Now," said the professor, as the laughter subsided, "I want you to recognize that this jar represents your life. The golf balls are the important things - your faith, family, children, health, friends, and favorite passions-things that if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your job, your house, and your car."
The sand is everything else—the small stuff. If you put the sand into the jar first," he continued, "there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you. Pay attention to the things that are critical to our happiness. Play with your children. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your partner out to dinner. Play another 18.

There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first, the things that really matter. Set your priorities. The rest is just sand.”

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented.

The professor smiled. "I'm glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there's always room for a couple of cups of coffee with a friend."

Hope you are smiling at this moment!

When things in your life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar...and the coffee...

If we compare the Mayonnaise Jar to the “Training Soccer Legends” program, the “Golf Balls” (i.e. the most important aspects that should receive the majority of attention), are:

- The technical skills of deceptive dribbling to exit on the strong foot
- Developing a complete repertoire of finishing abilities with the strong foot
- Learning to apply these skills in the 1 v 1 environment under increasingly difficult and more complicated conditions
- Learning the 2 man combination play options and performing these combinations in the 2 v 2 situation with increasingly difficult and more complicated conditions
- Playing in gradually higher levels of full-sided league and tournament competition.

There are further justifications for focusing on the strong foot and developing natural strengths at the expense of natural weaknesses. One of these is that, when the strong foot is the major focus, the young player builds on the genetic advantage.

"Talent is what you are blessed with. Learned skill is how you take care of the gift."

Author Unknown

Each of us is born with genetic aptitudes and corresponding weaknesses. It makes little sense focusing on the development of our weaknesses to merely an average level, if we can develop our strengths to an extremely high level of brilliance in the same amount of time. Admittedly there is a certain level of functionality that is needed in areas of genetic weakness. For example, in life one may have little aptitude for reading and writing but because a decent level of these abilities is desirable, even though one’s genius may be in math or science, significant time must
be spent to acquire reasonable skill in these areas. Most coaches apply this “well rounded” philosophy to soccer but fail to recognize that by focusing on a bit of everything they are actually preventing brilliance in a limited number of the most important things. This specific brilliance is only acquired by strong foot specialization. A soccer player may have little aptitude for weak footed shooting, however, most coaches will make him spend 50% of his technical training time developing the weak footed shot. The hypothesis of developing just the strong foot inherent within the “Training Soccer Legends” approach, relies on research showing that players will have a clear choice of which foot to use for shooting and passing in more than 90% of game situations. Therefore, if the genetically superior foot is trained 100% of the time players will have greatly improved applicable shooting ability and consequent success. This superior ball striking capability increases tactical options and positive outcomes in over 90% of ball possessions. It should be noted that because there are a greater number of technical and tactical options available to the player with one brilliant foot, the opportunities to choose and perform skills successfully will be far more numerous, diverse and rewarding.

“If you chase two rabbits, both will escape.”
Author Unknown

Training the stronger foot exclusively also utilizes the Physical Education principle of Economy of Training. Physical Education teachers are taught to structure the curriculum and environment to maximize effective developmental benefits. The country capable of structuring the research environment to develop the nuclear bomb has a better statistical chance of military success than the nation without this capacity. In a similar theoretical way Legends players have a greater arsenal of devastating weapons with which to render their opponents ineffective. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach uses the principle of economy of training to structure all practices and games so that there is no time wasted in learning techniques that impede the speed of tremendous creative skill development. By focusing every second of available practice time on only those skills that will determine the ability to play exceptionally at the very highest level, players trained the Legends way will maximize their potential.

“The giants of the race have been men of concentration, who have struck sledge-hammer blows in one place until they have accomplished their purpose. The successful men of today are men of one overmastering idea, one unwavering aim, men of single and intense purpose.”
Orison Swett Marden

A further benefit of training one exceptional foot only is the confidence factor. Any coach who has worked with 6 & 7 year olds knows that getting them to use their weak foot is extremely difficult. The tug-of-war between the coach who wants the player to use their weak foot and the player who only wants to use their strong foot is often a negative de-motivational experience for both parties. By focusing the young player on developing one incredible foot, that individual’s motivation and early acquisition of excellence, will be significantly greater. Simply put, any player whose good foot is twice as good as other players who have been forced to split ball striking time 50/50 between two feet, will have considerably more confidence and self-belief than other players. As players get older this confidence and self-belief will grow. Given twice the
number of shooting repetitions on one foot, as compared to players expected to use both feet, the player with one incredible foot learns to use that foot in many diverse ways. However, the player who is splitting time between the good foot and the weaker one will perhaps only master the simpler shooting skills with either foot.

The player who focuses on developing one incredible foot has a more realistic chance of developing the shooting and dribbling skills of Diego Maradona, who had an amazing left foot and a virtually non-existent right. The opportunity to groove a complete repertoire of powering, bending, chipping, volleying & half-volleying skills is more than doubled if a player ignores practicing average techniques on the weak foot in favor of acquiring the genius of the maestro with the strong one.

Why is it that development of these skills is more than doubled?

Because working on the weak foot is less than half as effective!

The weak foot is harder to train than the strong because more than 99% of us are born with a genetic aptitude towards one foot. To split time between the weak foot and the strong foot will result in the strong foot developing to a significantly reduced degree. The relative degree to which the development of the stronger foot suffers is far greater than the degree to which the weaker foot benefits. This is because the stronger foot has the natural wiring that will allow it to acquire far better touch, dexterity and control than the weaker one can ever be capable of. Just as some people are fast and others are slow, one leg is genetically less capable than the other. In most individuals it is impossible to train the weak limb to perform the more difficult creative technical skills the strong limb is genetically capable of. No environment highlights genetic differences in a more overt manner than athletics. Sports are where physical aptitudes and individual differences are exposed in the most public of forums. Comparatively the weak foot is the “slowest kid in the neighborhood” while the strong foot is the fastest. In this contest the slower child will never surpass the speed of the faster because no degree of training can compensate for the massive gap in natural ability. In this glaringly unequal comparison, the player who has developed the almost unlimited capability of the strong foot instead of wasting 50% of his time on the “wooden leg” will hold all the cards. The human being simply does not have the genetic capacity to develop the body’s natural weaknesses as quickly and effectively as its genetic strengths.

Why then does the traditional coaching community insist that half of all practice time should be spent on the weak foot? The answer is in convention, habit and lack of in-depth analysis. The vast majority of coaches were encouraged when young to be “two footed” players, therefore they are conditioned by their restricted “box” or upbringing to believe that this is a vital component of becoming a “complete” player. Furthermore, given a cursory examination, working on developing equal ability with both feet seems to make sense. The two-footed justification is based around the fear of not being able to take advantage of a scoring or passing opportunity on the rare occasions where using the weak foot is the only option. The claim is that players who are unable to take advantage of that rare weak-footed opportunity will regret not spending more time
on developing the weak foot. The reality is that players who have spent all their time maximizing
the ability of the strong foot can improvise and have a greater likelihood of achieving a
successful result in the majority of situations because their strong foot is comparatively brilliant.
The player who has focused exclusively on developing an incredible strong foot throughout his
soccer career can perform unusual and exceptional creative techniques to make the big play with
that foot. However, the player who has attempted to develop “two good feet” will have done so
at the cost of developing one absolutely fantastic foot. The player with one “incredible” foot will
be able to chip, bend, power, volley, half-volley, side-volley and bicycle the ball into the net. By
comparison the player with two “merely good” feet will only score fairly easy goals requiring a
limited range of simple techniques with each.

The logical progression of training one exceptional foot is the acqui-
sition of tremendous self-
belief. For the 7 year old the psychological value of working exclusively on the strong foot leads
to a tremendous feeling of accomplishment plus greater self-confidence and enjoyment. For the
17 year old who has been working exclusively on the strong foot for a decade, the game is a
breeze. His ability to prepare the ball instantly and use a vast repertoire of shooting and passing
skills will guarantee him a greater range of tactical options and tremendous confidence in “big
play” situations. His amazing range of ball striking techniques will generate the desire, ability
and self-concept needed to take control of the game. With these leadership characteristics he
maximizes his chances of becoming a ball wizard. He can then become the maestro and field
general capable of making the game winning “big play”.

Consider this list of players who made/make virtually all of their big plays with their strong foot.

Matthews, Puskas, Garrincha, Best, Tostao, Rivelino, Jairzinho, Pele, Cruyff, Maradona, Zico,
Romario, Cantona, Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Cristiano Ronaldo, Giggs, Roberto Carlos, Rivaldo.

The theory that young players will be much more likely to play at a higher level if the coach
focuses them on developing one extremely good foot is a simple recognition of:

1) The genetic make up of the human body

2) The acquisition of psychological strength and confidence that accompanies brilliance.

3) The fact that every truly great player makes the vast majority of big dribbling and finishing
plays with their strong foot.

Physical education theory, the natural aptitude of the human body, the logic and the evidence
provided by the world’s greatest players shows us that developing one phenomenal foot flows
with genetic aptitudes, builds self-belief and has constantly defined the best players in history.

This theory is backed up by research on basketball, football, ice hockey, tennis, stringed
instrument playing etc. In all sports or complicated two handed disciplines the performer uses the
stronger limb mainly for the "big plays". The weaker is used for simpler techniques in the vast
majority of situations. It is used for balancing the racket in a few tennis shots, or for the occasional easy lay up in basketball. One rarely sees a basketball player shooting threes or dunking, or a tennis player hitting a smash, with the weak hand.

It has been hypothesized that focusing intensely on the stronger foot would benefit the genetically gifted player but hurt the less gifted individual. I can give little credence to this theory. Those athletes who are significantly less athletic, or in some way genetically inferior to other players, are possibly the ones who can benefit the most from focusing exclusively on their weak foot. This is because the technical brilliance they can develop on their strong foot might well compensate for their genetic inability to win a sprint or a physical tussle for the ball. Furthermore, I find it surprising that some coaches regard the less genetically gifted player as less deserving of the opportunity to develop phenomenal technical capabilities with their genetically superior foot. By taking this approach such coaches choose to limit the horizons of such individuals by denying the opportunity to develop one incredible foot instead of merely one good and one poor one.

**Important Quick Note:** Every player will develop greater confidence by building vastly better strong foot skills. This will ensure success at the highest level he or she is potentially capable of playing. Players who are taught 12 moves and a complete repertoire of shooting skills with the stronger leg will acquire the ability to execute complex movement patterns at speed that are beyond the genetic capability of the weaker limb. Players trained in this way will build the tremendous strong-foot task specific agility and coordination needed to fulfill their soccer potential.
Chapter Fifty-Seven

Using One Exceptional Foot In Deceptive Dribbling

Many of the moves taught in the “Training Soccer Legends” approach involve the use of both feet. Moves such as the “Maradona Turn”, “Swivel-Swivel” and “Tap & Play Behind” use both feet in complex ways during the execution of the move. However each of these moves has a crucial technical component that should be made by the stronger foot. The “Cruyff Turn”, “Puskas”, “Pull Back Behind The Leg” and “Matthews” will be totally performed by the strong foot. Coaching all these moves develops tremendous general agility and coordination. However, the doubling of specific move performance gained by using only the strong foot, or performing the move so that the strong foot is used in the crucial phase, will foster brilliance in the grooving and subsequent effective performance of those moves.

From the above observation we can see that we are not reducing the number of moves worked on but simply halving the different neuromuscular actions to be repeated twice as often. Because both legs and feet are utilized in complicated movement patterns during the execution of the Legends moves, general agility and coordination will be finely tuned. However, by doubling the number of moves practiced in a specific direction, players will be twice as effective at performing the move in that specific direction. This greater specificity will undoubtedly lead to greater effectiveness at beating players or creating space and is guaranteed to result in higher levels of personal self-belief and confidence. Furthermore, by focusing on and doubling the dribbling and shooting repetitions on the strong foot in practice and games, players will be significantly more confident that, when faced with a psychologically intimidating situation, they can beat an opponent, score the great goal or make an incisive penetrating pass. This will lead to a further elevation of self-confidence.

“I love to score goals after passing all the defenders as well as the goalkeeper. This is not my specialty, but my habit.”

Ronaldo

Critics will point out that players are only half as deceptive if they use only one foot. However, if a player is twice as good and twice as confident with the strong foot because he didn't waste countless hours trying train the “wooden leg”, he will arguably be more than twice as deceptive on his strong foot and be able to beat defenders no matter which way they are steering him. Even when a defender steers the attacker towards his weak foot the fantastic one-footed player can beat him on the weak side while using his strong foot.

In all skill training there is an opportunity/cost equation. All of the great players are extremely one footed in the clutch. There is no doubt that they would have been more incredible if they had been as good on their weak foot as their strong foot. However, these players played and practiced soccer at every opportunity. They probably spent every possible minute using and developing
their one incredible foot. Therefore, the only logical conclusion we can make is that for a player to become as good with the weak foot as the strong one he would have to more than double his practice time. Clearly, the greatest players were obsessed with soccer and chose to play with a ball on their strong foot at every waking moment. Thus, we can only conclude that if history’s superstars couldn’t find the extra time to make their weak foot into an effective weapon, the objective of making the weak foot strong will only end up making the strong one weak.

Halving the time spent on refining the strong foot would have prevented the world’s greatest from becoming the players they were. Doubling the number of hours in the day or the number of hours practiced by these obsessed individuals wasn't possible, so we have a true catch 22. Do we dilute the quality of the good foot to develop the weakness? Or do we develop the strength to be an incredibly effective weapon?

The great coach identifies what made the great players great and reproduces those conditions in training. The great coach makes players as fantastic as their potential will allow. Just as the incredibly slow player will never play international soccer, the less genetically capable limb will never consistently score the great goal. The game itself will build the ability to perform simple techniques with the weak foot over time. However, if we are going to train our players to be brilliant, we need to recognize the opportunity/cost equation and, instead of training a player to strike the ball with power with both feet, train him to strike the ball with power, accuracy, touch and deception, in many different creative ways, with only the stronger foot. In this way the more genetically capable limb and foot develop a whole new arsenal of weapons with which to score great goals. Furthermore, due to the nature of human physiology, training the weaker limb and foot to the standard of the stronger one, would take significantly longer than training the good one to perform the same technique. This simple physiological fact means that players who spend 50% of their time training the weaker foot realize a small fraction of the relative training benefit when compared to the training benefit they would have realized if they had spent 100% of their training time developing a variety of shooting and passing techniques on their strong foot.

Whatever philosophical disagreements coaches may have it is an inescapable fact of genetics that the vast majority of human beings have an asymmetry between the ability of the right and left hands and feet. This limits the ability of the weaker limbs to learn both gross and fine motor movements. The difference between right and left sided capability is significant enough that, to spend years attempting to create the "two-footed" player by pursuing a practice approach that demands equal use of each foot, will only rob a player of the potential brilliance that could have been acquired with the strong foot for a mediocre return with the weak one.

If coaches do not recognize this and choose not to develop the singularity of focus on the strong foot that the greatest players in history have demonstrated, we will only rue the day when our players miss out on a professional career by the hair's breadth that better shooting or passing ability on the strong foot would have guaranteed them. It is not the ability to make an average possession pass on the weaker foot that will earn any player a call up to the higher level of play. It is the ability to make a phenomenal game winning play with the strong foot, in the showcase environment that will determine the opportunity to play at the very highest level.
In the British Journal of Sports Sciences volume 19, number 11, November 1, 2001 there was an excellent paper titled “Footedness in world soccer: An analysis of France ’98”. The authors were David P. Carey, Geoff Smith, Daniel T. Smith, John W. Shepherd, Jan Skrizer, Leslie Ord & Adam Rutland

The paper states that the 1998 World Cup players used their strong foot on 80-85% of all touches. Therefore, the empirical facts simply don't back up any assertion that great players are mostly two footed. Furthermore, the authors of the study point out that many of the 15-20% weak footed touches were taken in the lowest pressure situations, i.e. the players used their weak foot much more when they had greater time and space. From this it can be seen that greater than 80-85 percent of clutch touches were made with the stronger foot. All the statistics of this study point to the stone cold fact that the key plays are made with the strong foot approximately 9 out of 10 times or more.

This study gives independent verification of something I had been researching for a long time. My research was born from a "Eureka" moment that occurred while watching video clips of the greatest players making the greatest plays. At that moment I realized that the vast majority of the key dribbling, passing or shooting touches were made with the stronger foot.

Specific analysis of my library of tapes and clips of Pele revealed that he was extremely one-footed in the clutch. Whenever he was under pressure he resorted to using his stronger foot 9 out of 10 times. Pele is actually one of the best examples of a player of one-footed brilliance. With his strong foot he could shoot from the halfway line or bend a ball around a wall. He could chip the goalie or power a line drive bullet from 30 yards. Using his strong foot on the key touches he could dribble past multiple opponents in the attacking third. Most of the footage I have viewed of Pele in the clutch shows him using his right foot to the virtual exclusion of the left.

The greatest players use their strong foot approximately 9 times out of 10 in the clutch. However, they are so good at dribbling and finishing with their strong foot that in the dribble they can go past a defender on either side and make a successful pass or shot from a position that would appear to favor the weak foot. Practical study shows that the tremendous technical skill they have with the strong foot enhances their ability to create unique opportunities. Coaching a player into developing abilities with the strong foot that can never be acquired with the weaker one expands his horizons and increases his options. All the logic and research proves conclusively that developing one really excellent foot is the best way to maximize a player’s opportunity to play at the very highest level.

Pele, Maradona, Ronaldinho, Ronaldo and all the world superstars wouldn't be famous if, in the clutch, they attempted to use their weak foot 50% of the time. It is their unique ability with one foot that has made them the superstars they are today. Even when defenders know exactly which foot these players are going to use they are usually powerless to stop them.
To check the validity of the Journal of Sports Science research I went through my library of "big play" video clips and counted the strong versus weak foot touches by the world superstars.

The following is a list of players whose every touch was recorded: Ronaldo, Ronaldinho, Pele, Maradona, Cruyff, Van Basten, Bergkamp, Denilson, Zidane, Beckham, R Baggio, Raul, Shevchenko, Totti, Owen, Romario, Rivaldo, Crespo, Riquelme, Henry, Giggs, Van Nistleroy, Figo, R Carlos, Rooney, Christiano Ronaldo, Cantona, Socrates, Zico, Mattheus, Falcao, Pires.

Total touches with strong foot = 749
Total touches with weak foot = 101

Percentage of touches made with weak foot = between 13-14%
Percentage of touches made with strong foot = between 86-87%

My observations are backed up the research from the Journal of Sports Science. Many of the weak foot touches were the easiest ones. A number of these consisted of tap in goals after the goalie was beaten, simple touches in the dribble and easy passes. The great goal-scoring shots, crosses and complicated dribbling touches were virtually exclusively executed with the stronger foot, except in the case of certain moves such as the Maradona Turn where both feet have to be used to an equal degree of difficulty. An example of how the more difficult techniques were the exclusive domain of the stronger foot is provided by the fact that only one of all the volleys, banana kicks or bicycle kicks were made with the weaker foot. Of all the scoring shots from outside of the penalty area only Zidane made one with the weaker foot. Ronaldo was the most two-footed player with 83 right-footed touches to 28 left-footed. Zinadine Zidane was next with 76 right-footed touches and 20 left-footed touches. Maradona had 148 left-footed and only 4 right footed. Rivaldo had 20 left-footed and no right footed.

The research suggests that the closer the player gets to the opposition goal the greater the use of the strong foot. The Journal of Sports Science article placed weak foot usage for all 1998 World Cup players at between 15-20%. My statistics involve a greater percentage of clutch situations and indicate a weak foot usage of 13-14%, of which most were much easier technical actions than those performed with the stronger foot.

If both studies are correct and the weak foot percentages include easier techniques, the data would seem to back up the premise that the world's greatest players have ascended to the highest level because they have one truly excellent foot. In addition to reviewing video clips I statistically assessed the following tapes:

1. The Giants of Brazil
2. Maradona
3. The World Cup's Greatest XI

Strong foot and weak foot touches were recorded for the following superstars:
Pele 92 versus 33, Jairzinho 66 versus 0, Garrincha 50 versus 2, Cruyff 57 versus 12, Platini 9 versus 3, Cubillas 21 versus 1, Rivelino 20 versus 1, Tostao 37 versus 3, Kempes 31 versus 3, Muller 4 versus 0, Maradona 167 versus 4, Gullit 24 versus 2.
Totals 578 versus 62

The percentage of strong to weak foot touches are as follows:
- Strong foot 89-90% - Weak foot 10-11%

The obvious conclusion is that the world's greatest players use their strong foot on average between 17 & 18 times out of every 20 touches. When compared the degree of difficulty of the plays performed with the strong foot was definitely greater. A far higher percentage of the weak footed plays were of a simpler nature i.e. easy dribbling touches, short passes or close in shots. In the weak footed plays there was less need for tremendous control, power or advanced technique, such as bending, chipping or volleying the ball. Further strength to the argument that training one exceptional foot is the best policy is added with the realization that the highlights evaluated in my study are the most spectacular ones. If our goal is to train the “ball wizard” it is our responsibility to develop players who can perform the miraculous technical action in the clutch. The true clutch situation is found offensively, in front of the opposition goal, where only the most creative, deceptive, instantaneous action will result in a goal. From all the research it is conclusive that when the chips are down and the big play is needed in this area of the field the great players resort almost exclusively to their strong foot. Therefore, after researching many videotape sequences containing footage of the greatest players in world history, I can only conclude that training two-footed players, at the cost of the incredible one-footed player, is illogical. All the factual and theoretical evidence shows that the weaker foot is used relatively little in normal play and even less in the clutch. In the video clips and tapes I have assessed, great players such as Maradona, Kempes, Rivelino, Jairzinho, Gullit, Tostao, Cubillas, Garrincha, Bergkamp & Henry exhibit an almost complete disdain for using their weaker foot. The most prolific two-footed players are Pele and Ronaldo with approximately one quarter to one third of what are mostly simpler technical touches, being made with the weak foot. Zidane takes approximately 25% of his touches weak footed and is the player who exhibits the greatest “degree of difficulty” balance between those he takes with his weaker and stronger feet.

The evidence has led me to the conclusion that focusing players on developing their genetic strength, (strong foot), to be as good as it can be, instead of spending time on the genetic weakness, (weak foot), with limited potential for improvement, will maximize potential and ability to make big plays at the highest level. All coaches should determine their own training methods. However, I hope that the logic and research detailed here will encourage you to leave any previous biases behind, step outside of the box and pursue the highest potential goals.

While we may all desire to develop players with two equally great feet, the evidence shows that even the very best players in world history, who dedicated themselves to the game of soccer to a far greater degree than most players ever will, did not develop two great feet and/or the confidence to use both feet very often in the clutch at the highest level.
Furthermore, the “one great foot” approach makes even more sense for a player who hasn't got the natural ability to develop two good or even decent feet. For the less adept or committed player one good foot would be worth the trade for two average or poor feet many times over. At a lower level of play defenders are not as good and won't have much idea about channeling attackers toward the weak foot, so the benefits of training one foot only are probably greater at lower than higher levels. Additionally, players at a lower level are given more space and time in the clutch and therefore, the option to choose the foot to use more often because defenders don't play as tight. With one good foot, as opposed to two poor or decent ones, the chances of success obviously favor the player with one good foot. The logical conclusion is that the lower the level a player plays at the less gifted they will be and the harder it will be to develop even one good foot. Because of genetic preference it will be even harder for a less athletic player than a more gifted athlete to develop the weak foot. Therefore, the less capable player will be better off if he focuses on making the best foot the very best it can be rather than attempting to make the weak one into what is inevitably a less effective weapon. Critics have hypothesized that coaching only the strong foot prevents the possibility of developing the world’s first truly two-footed superstar. I wouldn't put much credence in this “exception to the rule” theory as being worthwhile of consideration as the basis for a coaching approach. Once in a blue moon genetics will throw up a player equally gifted with both feet who is capable of learning a very high level of two-footed skill. Such an individual shouldn’t be used as the model for a coaching philosophy because of the extraordinary "exception to the rule" nature of his capabilities. Furthermore, even very gifted genetically balanced individuals can only develop two feet that are nowhere near as good as one that receives double the attention and practice.

“I’d give my right foot to be ambipedal”
© Andy Barney

**Important Quick Note:** It is a physiological fact that, in the vast majority of the population, there is no possible way to even up the abilities of the weaker and the stronger foot without spending vastly more time on the weaker than the stronger one. The neuromuscular system is simply not wired to perform left and right-sided physical skills with any type of comparable efficiency. As a consequence one would have to work on the weak foot many times longer and harder to achieve any type of comparable efficiency. All this effort on developing the less capable limb and foot would be at a severe developmental cost to the more naturally capable one. Whenever researching traits or capabilities one must take the largest relevant test group cross-section possible. Between the, "Journal of Sports Sciences" article and my own personal research there are enough great and very good World Cup players represented of every ilk and position. The statistics and conclusions are very convincing. The research shows that the greatest players have all demonstrated a conclusive preference for using the strong foot in "big play" situations. There are exceptions to the rule such as Zidane's left foot volley in the Champion's League final, however, it is obvious from the research that the “Soccer Legends” create and finish the really big plays by using the strong foot in excess of 19 out of 20 situations.

As a consequence the only logical coaching conclusion is to focus on the strong foot and make it incredible!!
Chapter Fifty-Eight

Treating Players and Team as a Family Not a Business

Families exist to love, educate, support and cherish. Businesses exist to make money. Youth soccer, premier or otherwise, should be run by family values where enjoyment, effort, development and support are paramount. Professional soccer is run by business values where results and winning are the most vital objectives. In between are the high school and college environments. Some high school teams have coaches who run their teams with extreme “win at all cost” business type values. Conversely some colleges have programs that are operated with a loving and supportive family type structure. As an educator and mentor I believe firmly in maintaining a “family” style coaching culture through college. I believe that collegiate graduation is the absolute earliest that a young person should have their individual horizons restricted by an emphasis on winning versus development.

Unfortunately for many youth players we live in a “perform or perish, win at all costs, profit or perdition” company/business type culture. We are often valued for what we produce rather than because we make our best effort. If a youth coach assigns value based upon day-to-day productivity, she is helping instill a warped adult system of value judgment into a child’s personality. Throughout life, children and adults need to be shown that their existence has value whether or not they are successful in the business/profit sense of the word. Children need to be educated to try their very best in every important situation that demands 100% effort. This is a gradual “step by step” process. For children to experiment and maximize their creative potential they need a 100% effort “reward for risk” education. If children are to be freed from the bonds of “perform or perish” coaching they must taught that it is the effort and risk, not the result, that counts.

“The policy of being too cautious is the greatest risk of all.”

_Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru_

The coach must hold the superstar to the same set of effort values as the rest of the players. Coaches must teach children that each player on the team is just as important as another by valuing individual uniqueness, even when aware of shortcomings. When you respect your players and focus on their positive qualities they are freer to learn and grow in all directions. If the coach approaches player education from this perspective a greater percentage of their students will develop and achieve to a much higher level. Those who claim that the potential superstar will be held back in a family culture couldn’t be more wrong. The potential superstar on most “business style” teams becomes “spoiled” because they are an excessive focus of the team. In this scenario the superstar becomes the assigned coaching and player target for most passes because he can help the team win more often. He gets more playing time, more recognition and more adulation. All of which sounds great until the long-term psychological cost is totaled up. With any type of preferential treatment that hasn’t been earned through a genuine
greater effort than given by peers, there is a psychological tendency to expect even greater unjustified preferential treatment in the future. When the bubble bursts, as it eventually has to, the superstar is left with a warped entitlement expectation and a reduced capacity to give genuine effort in environments where he or she doesn’t “rule the roost”. The superstar syndrome is often exposed in the transition stage between youth and adult soccer. A tremendous percentage of youth superstars who were tipped for the “big-time” never make it. One of the main reasons for this is the false sense of self-concept and poor work ethic created by youth coaches and parents who give them, or expect them to receive, preferential treatment. Often misguided coaches use gifted players to achieve the win instead of using each practice or game to teach them the 100% effort, risk for reward attitude and skills needed to develop them to maximum potential.

If the coach adopts a fair and unified “reward for risk” approach, each of his players will feel cherished as a person and this will help optimize personal growth, fuel competency and build self-respect. Much more importantly each child will feel that he is important and worthwhile regardless of his competence. Performance growth and success builds the personal sense of being valuable, while being cherished as a person, nurtures the feeling of being loved.

Every child needs to feel both loved and worthwhile. However, whether in soccer or in life, lovability and respect must be tied to effort not outcomes. This is because personal effort and the self-concept attached is 100% under each child’s control. The more a young player feels respected, the more he likes himself and the more likely he is to perform in satisfactory ways. Therefore, the coach should always attach love, recognition and respect to the desirable and manageable effort factor, instead of attaching undue importance to uncertain and unmanageable outcomes.
Chapter Fifty-Nine

The Comfort Zone is the Danger Zone

Expecting and Promoting Errors

The problem with American soccer is not that we are making too many errors, but that we are making too few. What the great coach needs to produce are players who make decisions and take risks. If you believe that growth comes from risk taking, that you cannot grow without it, then in leading kids towards growth it is essential to get them to take intelligent risks and make mistakes. Errors are good. No errors, no progress. The successful player will profit from her errors and try again in a different way. No soccer player performs the right move, or hits the target, every time. That’s why players should be rewarded when their experiments fail. If a player is trying to learn something new she should get credit for it. A player who isn’t encouraged to make errors may learn nothing. Making errors is a good thing. Great players take responsibility for them, keep trying to fix them, conquer the challenge, and move on to the next one. In youth soccer an intelligent error is not a error, it is an opportunity for education. The key to great coaching is teaching this to your players so that they can benefit maximally from every attempt that fails. A soccer career spent making errors is more developmental and valuable than one playing safe. While one player may hesitate because he feels inferior, another will be busy making errors and becoming ever more superior. Many coaches would argue that they do not have the time to encourage errors. We would argue that you do not, not have the time.

Traditional game coaching is geared towards training players to attempt primarily those skills and tactical ploys that they can perform successfully. This approach is seriously flawed because this mode of coaching is fear based and more geared towards using what the players know than developing what they don’t.

“I’ve missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times, I've been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

Michael Jordan

The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is the complete polar opposite of this fear based approach because it is high risk and entirely oriented towards teaching the young player to reject playing within existing comfort zones in favor of a much more beneficial “go for it” mind set. Soccer players that only do what they already know they can, remain deeply entrenched in their comfort zone. All of us develop hard-wired comfort zones that tend to become more difficult to escape as we age. Even though comfort zones are less established in young players, most coaches choose an approach that teaches and uses a creatively limited but familiar and effective skill range. They fail to recognize that expanding the technical, tactical, physiological and psychological comfort zones of ones players should be the constant objective of a great coach. At age 4 or 5 kids have few comfort zones. They are naturally inclined to explore and experiment.
As the years go by kids establish a set mode of operating and stay closer to that tried and tested path of comfort while it offers them a degree of success and accomplishment. However, when the youth player attempts to step up to a higher level of play, the tried and tested comfort zone no longer works as well. At the higher level of play skills and tactics that reaped success at the lower level often fail miserably. When the opponent is bigger, faster and more experienced the inexperienced player needs a greater arsenal of weapons and a heightened ability to play at speed. Only players who have been constantly challenged to expand their comfort zone in every practice and game, will be maximally psychologically and physiologically equipped to handle the challenges posed by the bigger, stronger, more aggressive opponent. When the true test of ability in front of the recruiter arrives will your players have what it takes?

The coach who tries to get players to play outside of their comfort zone is always fighting the natural human tendency to settle for the unthreatening status quo. It is indeed a rare player who sets her sights on new horizons, relishes the exploration of strange territory, braves new frontiers and conquers fresh challenges. Doing this without the constant encouragement and support of the coach is impossible. The greatest problem with playing within one’s comfort zone is that no growth occurs while this is an accepted focus of the program. To discover new horizons one must push one’s ship away from the familiar shore. Similarly, to expand one’s comfort zone players must leave the comfort zones they have already established. Lamentably for most players the majority of coaches have a traditional focus on winning the next game, always passing the ball and pigeonholing players to make use of their strengths, instead of training utility players who have great all round strengths and no weaknesses. Unfortunately the ability and responsibility to take risk cannot develop in such a conservative climate. Therefore, players trained in this way grow up to be safety first and defensive minded individuals instead of exciting and creative field generals.

**The Responsibility to Take Great Individual Risk**

Great youth coaches encourage the use of the most difficult and riskiest dribbling and finishing skills. Once these skills are well established they demand the most difficult passing and combination plays. While the players are learning they expect them to take unrealistic shots, attempt risky penetrating passes and try the most difficult fakes in all areas of the field. This is because what is unrealistic and risky when first attempted becomes more realistic and less risky with each subsequent attempt. Great coaches are positive mentors who expect their players to try the unexpected, encourage wild experimentation and insist that their players take irrational risks during every practice and game, until such time as their players have developed an incredible arsenal of weapons and a vast storehouse of creative skills, i.e. a massively expanded comfort zone.

In order to expand their abilities young players need to play in an “uncomfortable” mode for the duration of all practices and games. If players are comfortable they aren’t growing. If they are playing on the edge of their comfort zone and making mistakes, while also enjoying some success, they will maximize their potential.
Soccer Specific Discomfort
The “Training Soccer Legends” methodology is geared towards soccer specific discomfort. This discomfort involves:

- Expanding the boundaries of creative skill
- Constantly improving tactical speed
- Maximizing manageable stress to the three main physiological systems
- Applying gradually more intense, but reasonable, pressure on the psyche

Coaches are encouraged whenever possible, to stress all four areas of soccer specific fitness to a “personal best” level in every practice and game.

When Should Youth Players Retreat Into Their Comfort Zone?
Although comfort zones are the developing player’s enemy, retreat into one’s comfort zone is often expected and highly praised by coaches when “the game is on the line”. Because risk taking lessens the chance of winning, young players are too often discouraged from taking risks beyond their current capacity for successful performance and outcome.

My hypothesis is that there is only one circumstance during a youth career when a player should be encouraged to retreat into “the comfort zone”. This is when the game is “crucial”. What makes a youth game “crucial”? When does the “crucial” game occur? What are the criteria for giving a game the “crucial” designation?

With Respect to Playing in the Comfort Zone What Makes a Youth Game Crucial?
Many coaches would say that a tournament game, especially a final, is a “crucial” game. Others view every game as a “crucial” game. Both would be viewing the game purely from a “team win” perspective when bestowing this designation on the game in question. The great coach recognizes that there is one true individual circumstance when the game in question becomes “crucial”. This is when there is an active recruiter, with the potential to open the door to a higher level of play, at the game, practice or tryout in question. At whatever point players are being recruited for selection to a higher level of play they must be able to play inside their comfort zone to minimize mistakes yet still make enough “big plays” to impress the watching selectors. All players will be better equipped to impress the recruiter if they have spent years expanding their viable “safe” comfort zone to include “big play skills”. As a consequence of the uncomfortable, risk based “Training Soccer Legends” practice and playing mode they have been encouraged to adopt while learning, Legends players have technical, tactical, physiological and psychological comfort zones that are significantly wider and deeper than those of their opponents. Therefore, even when playing their personal version of “safety first soccer”, their superior technical and tactical speed will maximize their chances of selection to the next level of play.
In a game where players are evaluated largely from a subjective perspective, the ownership of a vastly superior repertoire of creative technical skills and far greater improvisational tactical speed, will be the decisive factor in the ability to impress and be recruited to a higher level.

However, in order to pursue the widest and deepest individual comfort zone the fear of statistical team defeat has to be set aside in favor of a high-risk playing approach. This long-term philosophy is designed to eliminate an individual’s short-term “comfort zone”, while expanding her long-term comfort zone. Team losses will occur regularly. However, while the team is losing games to the opponent who plays an individually limited, expedient, win motivated, style of soccer, the individuals on the losing team will be relishing their personal growth and building the type of skills, attitude, fitness and tactical speed base that will enable them to reach and excel at the higher levels of play.

The Long Term Result
Even the relative newcomer to soccer has to recognize that creative dribbling and finishing is revered in Brazil. Brazilian soccer society worships the player who can make successful moves, do funky tricks and score goals. As a consequence young Brazilians aspiring to play at the highest level, grow up in a climate that encourages and rewards the “ball-hog/hot-dog” like no other on earth. The Brazilian national team has long shown that it is the team with the most creative players that will eventually win more often than the less creative opponent. The Brazilians have never had a consistent attacking shape or tactic because they haven’t needed to. Because its players have an incredible repertoire of creative technical skills, Brazil has an amazing improvisational ability to influence and vary the shape of the attack each time they go forward. This is combined with an associated tactical ability to read the opposition’s defensive set up and play at speed with vision to exploit any perceived opportunity. As a consequence Brazil can improvise a variety of tactical solutions “on the fly”. When players are trained to have the ability to quickly recognize the opposition’s defensive structure, and the creative skills to improvise viable penetrating solutions under extreme defensive pressure, practiced and regimented pre-set offensive shape and pattern play tactics become redundant.

“A self that is only differentiated - not integrated - may attain great individual accomplishments, but risks being mired in self-centered egotism. By the same token, a person who self is based exclusively on integration will be well connected and secure, but lack autonomous individuality. Only when a person invests equal amounts of psychic energy in these two processes and avoids both selfishness and conformity is the self likely to reflect complexity.”

Important Quick Note: As the years go by all the time spent playing and training outside of the comfort zone reaches the “pay-off”. This is when individual brilliance and statistical wins go hand in hand because not even the best defenses can withstand a sustained assault from a group of players with a vast creative arsenal of individual and collective, technical and tactical offensive weapons.
Chapter Sixty

Simultaneous Gains – The Key to Fast Track Growth

Traditional coaching theory promotes the type of practice that isolates one aspect of the game. This may be a technical aspect such as heading, or a tactical aspect, e.g. set plays. Unfortunately, while a coach and team are working on one aspect of the game the other areas are usually neglected and eroding. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach has proven that players with well developed deceptive dribbling and finishing abilities simultaneously become proficient in all of soccer’s other vital ground based technical skill areas. Furthermore, players with a deep finishing and deceptive dribbling background can also acquire vastly more tactical, psychological and physiological strength, if their post technical phase of training involves a very heavy emphasis on two fundamental types of progressively more challenging practice structures, i.e. conditioned 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 exercises. Just as there is a quickest way to get to work each day there is a most economical and maximally effective progressive practice structure that develops the best possible player in the shortest possible time. This is achieved by structuring each and every practice, once the purely technical part of the curriculum has been completed, so that all players have to use and refine the key techniques, the really decisive clutch tactics, the three physiological systems and the psychological capacity for 100% effort, creativity and aggression. In order to maximize individual potential once the basic technical phase has been completed, the refinement of these essential game facets should occur simultaneously with each and every practice.

In soccer there are four areas that dictate the success of the team and individuals within the group framework. These are:

- Technical
- Tactical
- Psychological
- Physiological.

In the “Training Soccer Legends” approach the four areas outlined above are re-defined as follows:

- Creative Technical
- Chaotic Tactical
- Clutch Psychological
- Specific Physiological

Each of these four areas of the game has been broken down into its constituent parts. These areas have been extensively analyzed and evaluated according to their essential components. These components have then been ranked in order of importance. The most difficult aspects of each have been awarded a 1, (the highest ranking possible), for degree of difficulty, with the least difficult earning a 6, (the lowest ranking possible).
Chapter Sixty-One

Five Skills in Less Than Half the Time

As a group, the technical skills of soccer can be broadly broken down individually into two broad but distinct categories:

- Release skills (shooting, heading & passing)
- Ball possession/acquisition skills (dribbling, receiving & tackling)

By working exclusively on only dribbling and shooting technique in order to concurrently develop the skills of passing, receiving and defending the “Training Soccer Legends” approach is revolutionary in the extreme.

“There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.”

Niccolo Machiavelli

Just as it is much easier to learn other European languages once the more difficult root language of Latin has been studied and mastered, it is also much easier to pass a soccer ball accurately once the much more difficult skill of shooting and scoring regularly has been conquered. Unless one believes the ridiculous hypothesis that all learning occurs in a specific isolated vacuum, the cross-over benefits of transfer of training make it the duty of the great soccer coach to analyze and identify those specific drills and other curriculum components that will most reap the rewards provided by exploiting the established physical education transfer of training principle.

The technical skill continuum I have used for over 15 years profits from the transfer of training principle to the utmost degree by focusing totally on the two most difficult, yet diametrically opposed, skills of the game. It positions the most difficult release skill at one end of the scale and the hardest possession/acquisition skill at the other. The most difficult release skill of the game is one touch shooting/finishing. This is because of the many extreme pressures that the shooter experiences when attempting to score. The hardest possession/acquisition skill is deceptive dribbling to beat an opponent near to goal. This is because of the tremendous degree of difficulty inherent within the skill and the close proximity of aggressive opposition. In the middle of the continuum are the release and possession/acquisition skills that are easier to learn and perform successfully.

In the following table the numbering system denotes degree of difficulty with number 1 indicating the highest ranked creative and difficult technical skill situation and number 6 assigned to the skill that novices can often perform with some success i.e. tackling.
**Most Difficult Release Skills**

1. One-touch finishing (Foot or head)
2. Two-touch finishing
3. Unlimited touch finishing
4. One-touch passing (Foot or head)
5. Two-touch passing
6. Multiple-touch passing

**Easiest Release Skills**

**Easiest Ball Possession/Acquisition Skills**

6. Tackling
5. Two touch receiving
4. One-touch receiving
3. Straight line dribbling
2. Deceptive dribbling
1. Deceptive dribbling to beat an opponent

**Most Difficult Ball Possession/Acquisition Skills**

If a more difficult neuromuscular skill contains the movement patterns of an easier skill, the easier skill will be learned simultaneously while the more difficult skill is being acquired. One-touch finishing is the most difficult release skill, while deceptive dribbling is the hardest possession skill. Each occupies an extreme position in the continuum and has the highest degree of difficulty value in its technical category. As a consequence, learning these “two most difficult skills of soccer” will have the greatest positive overlapping benefit, (transfer of training), into all easier ground based skills of the game. In other words, because they are easier, the skills of passing, receiving and defending/tackling will be simultaneously acquired while working intensely on shooting and deceptive dribbling.

_Dark and difficult times lie ahead. Soon we must all face the choice between what is right and what is easy._

_JK Rowling_
Chapter Sixty-Two

Great Scorers are Epic Passers

The vital components of finishing are:
- Decision to shoot - willingness to take responsibility
- Composure under pressure
- Correct choice of shooting option e.g. left foot, low far post, banana shot
- Accuracy
- Quick release
- Weight i.e. line drive power or delicate chip
- Timing of release with regard to opponents.

The seven components of shooting and passing are very similar. However, if we analyze them it becomes apparent that shooting is a far more difficult release skill than passing from every perspective:
- Decision to shoot. Deciding to shoot is harder than the choosing to pass. This is because the shot is more crucial and the psychological pressure when shooting is more intense. Shooting is an acceptance of the ultimate responsibility i.e. trying to score. However, passing is more often the releasing or passing over of responsibility to a teammate.

- Composure under pressure. When finishing, the pressure from defenders and the goalkeeper is much greater than for passing. Consequently, the ability to remain cool and demonstrate great technique under fire will be nurtured to a much greater degree if players are placed in significantly more shooting than passing situations.

- Correct choice of option. Because of the very limited target area, e.g. just inside the post, and higher degree of defensive pressure, the range of potentially successful options is narrower. Making an appropriate choice is therefore more difficult and exponentially more important.

- Accuracy. Many times an inaccurate pass will find another teammate or allow for the intended receiver to adjust and still gain possession. However, incidences of inaccurate shots finding the back of the net are rare.

- Quick release. Because defenses plays tighter with greater urgency the closer the ball gets to their goal, there is a greater need for a quick release in front of goal than in any other area of the field. Added to which, because of the limited target area and the psychological stress involved with taking the shot, the challenges of the snapshot are considerably greater than those of a quick pass.
- Weight. Appropriate weight of shot determines whether the dipping volley, banana shot or chip goes over the bar or wide of goal. Weight and pace tolerances are much finer in finishing than passing because of the limited static target area and the urgent aggressive actions of defenders and goalkeeper.

- Timing. Owing to restricted space and the reduced size of the viable target area involved in most shooting situations, split-second timing adjustments are required to take advantage of, or create, the scoring opportunity. When compared to shooting, the degree of timing necessary for passing is far less precise due to the lower pressures inherent within the passing situation.

Because shooting is the most challenging release skill of soccer and shares the same technical components as passing, the young player will develop the best all round ability to shoot and pass if technical training is concentrated completely upon finishing. This approach is more than a two for one deal. With this approach you can train a superb finisher while also developing an excellent passer in less than half the practice time it would take to develop both skills. The total dedicated time is less than half because splitting the emphasis 50/50 between passing and finishing significantly diminishes a players’ ability to execute the appropriate finish at speed. This relative loss of finishing proficiency is due to the more relaxed demands involved in passing practice. However, the opposite is true where all practice time that would have otherwise been allocated to finishing because shooting the ball requires more precision, power and speed of technique, under far greater defensive pressure than applied to passing situations.
Chapter Sixty-Three

Phenomenal Dribblers are Marvelous Receivers

The other really difficult technical skill of soccer is deceptive dribbling. Deceptive dribbling is the most difficult and challenging possession/acquisition skill. The other possession/acquisition skills are tackling and receiving. Dribbling, receiving and tackling share many similar technical actions, components and movement patterns, however, these actions, components and patterns only transfer maximally from deceptive dribbling into receiving and tackling not vice versa. This transfer does not occur in reverse because the degree of technical difficulty of receiving and tackling is far less than that involved in executing such moves as the Maradona or Cruyff Turn under close, aggressive, defensive pressure.

The vital components of both dribbling and receiving are:

- Touch
- Deception
- Balance
- Quickness
- Strength
- Correct option selection
- Timing

Most of the constituent components for dribbling, receiving and tackling are similar. However, if we analyze them we will see that these components are pressured and challenged to a far greater degree in dribbling circumstances than in receiving or tackling situations.

- Touch. Premier dribbling is a succession of silky-smooth and deceptive touches of the soccer ball. Good dribbling practices involve many more touches on the ball than good receiving sessions. Great touch under extreme pressure is nurtured faster in structured deceptive dribbling practices than when training receiving. Study of 1v1 keep-away or 1v1 going to goal indicates a ball touch ratio far in excess of the most beneficial of receiving drills. Furthermore, study of the nature of those touches indicates that they are executed under greater pressure with finer tolerances in most dribbling scenarios, thereby developing a greater awareness of how to escape from pressure deceptively.

- Deception. The need to be deceptive is far more common in dribbling than receiving. Dribbling fakes and moves to deceive the opponent are both numerous and diverse. This is not the case with receiving where options for deception are more limited and less likely to be needed. Additionally, deception in dribbling is more difficult because the ball carrier is subjected to more pressure from opposition than the receiver who is usually targeted for a pass only when he is open.
• Balance. Dribbling is far more challenging to individual balance than receiving because it is far more difficult to maintain balance and coordination in relation to the ball while being heavily pressured by an opponent. Dribbling under pressure requires constant positional adjustment and weight transfer. Analysis of balance adjustments in dribbling and receiving situations indicate factors of repetition and development many times greater and more difficult in dribbling drills, as opposed to receiving drills.

• Quickness. In dribbling, players have to be quicker with their feet and faster in performing total body movements than when receiving. The reason for this is the greater pressure from opposition in the dribbling situation. Therefore, dribbling situations not only test but also develop, reactions and explosive ball and body speed.

• Strength. Receiving is rarely a test of physical strength, whereas deceptive dribbling under pressure is the ultimate test of strength. In no other area of the game is the player subjected to such extremes of force and constant physical pressure as when dribbling. Pele, Maradona and the other great dribblers were all pushed and hacked brutally in most of their games. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that constant exposure to dribbling situations develops a resilience and toughness not provided by receiving drills.

• Correct option selection. Effective technical execution is a function of making the right decision under pressure. The greater the pressure, the harder the decision and the quicker a player has to think. Dribbling offers a more difficult decision making challenge because the player is attempting to focus on options away from the ball while warding off an intense physical challenge and creating space with creative footwork and deception. Receiving does not offer the same degree of technical, tactical, physiological and psychological challenge because the number of variables and degrees of difficulty are lower.
Chapter Sixty-Four

Terrific Dribblers and Scorers
Create Amazing Defenders

Because the 1 v 1 dribbling and finishing emphasis offers the greatest defensive challenges to opponents this approach has the added advantage of making the players trained by this method tremendous clutch defenders. The second long-term phase of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach involves attacking and defending opponents in the 1 v 1 situation. Consistently defending against players capable of performing moves such as the Maradona Turn, the Cruyff Turn, the Rivelino, the Beardsley, the Matthews, the Puskas etc, makes the defender more capable of focusing effectively upon the ball and less susceptible to the deceptive movement of the attacker’s body. Such experience results in what can only be described as an intuitive defensive ability to almost “mind read” the intentions of the attacker. Because Legends trained defenders face 1 v 1 defensive clutch situations thousands of times, the right defensive decisions and responses become intuitive and instantaneous. The most important unit of the game is the 1 v 1 match-up. Any team that has players capable of dominating the 1 v 1 situation offensively and defensively will win many more games than they lose.

Furthermore, because the “Training Soccer Legends” approach trains the best dribblers and finishers, the logical consequence of defending against the best is a learned ability to defend more effectively at a higher level than a player who learns to defend against average dribblers and finishers. 1 v 1 defending against great attackers forces the defender to get tighter and deny shooting time and space to a much greater degree then against the average passing oriented “team player”. The better the strikers, the tougher the defensive job and the better the defenders eventually become. When attackers are better the defender has to learn the optimal distance and angle of jockeying, delaying and channeling the opponent in order to restrict goal scoring chances. This adjustment happens to a far greater degree in the “Training Soccer Legends” approach than in other coaching philosophies.

**Important Quick Note:** Coaches and players can make a significant increase in the developmental value of training by focusing their technical efforts exclusively on shooting and dribbling during practice. The transfer of training values from shooting and dribbling to passing, receiving, tackling and 1v1 defending is maximal. If you focus entirely upon dribbling and shooting you're on a significantly faster track to creating a great team.
Chapter Sixty-Five

Train Chaotic Tactics
Speed Under Extreme Pressure

At opposite ends of the tactical continuum are the two most difficult and crucial extremes in soccer i.e. 1 v 1 and 11 v 11. At one end of the continuum is 1 v 1, the smallest tactical unit of the game in the most challenging area of the field. 1 v 1 is one of the two most challenging scenarios in soccer because of the immediate and crucial responsibility to create penetration with the ball when attacking and to prevent penetration by the opponent when defending. The team that wins the most 1 v 1 battles usually wins the game. The number of crucial ball and opponent related micro-tactical decisions and the sheer intensity of the do-or-die 1 v 1 situation makes this the competitive cauldron of micro-tactics. 2 v 2 is a little easier than 1 v 1 because time in the crucial ball possession phase of the game, is reduced by half. However, 2 v 2 is complicated by the team variables due to the addition of a teammate and opponent. The addition of teammates and opponents from 2 v 2 upwards gradually lessens the micro-tactical pressure while increasing the macro-tactical challenge of the situation. This eventually leads us to the most difficult macro-tactical numerical configuration i.e. 11 v 11. This is the largest macro-tactical breakdown of the game because it contains the greatest number and most complicated arrangement of evaluative, computational and option selection variables and possibilities. The sheer number of factors that have to be recognized, processed and assessed before choosing the best course of action make the 11 v 11 tactical breakdown the other most challenging tactical scenario in soccer. The micro-tactical extreme is 1v1, while the macro-tactical extreme is 11 v 11. Both 1 v 1 and 11 v 11 are made significantly more challenging by proximity to goal. Compared to these two situations everything else is relatively easy. The following tactical chart depicts the most difficult tactical situations at either end with the easier tactical situations at the mid-point as follows:

**Most Difficult Micro-Tactical Situation**
1. 1 v 1
2. 2 v 2
3. 3 v 3
4. 4 v 4
5. 5 v 5

**Easiest Micro and Macro Tactical Situation**
6. 6 v 6
5. 7 v 7
4. 8 v 8
3. 9 v 8
2. 10 v 10
1. 11 v 11

**Most Difficult Macro-Tactical Situation**
On the one extreme of the tactical continuum is the 1 v 1 situation. This circumstance is the smallest tactical unit of soccer and has the tremendous benefit of maximizing ball touches. However, it has the disadvantage of minimizing the number of tactical decisions needing to be made. On the farthest end of the continuum from 1 v 1 is 11 v 11. 11 v 11 has the obvious advantage of necessitating the maximum number of decisions but has the disadvantage of restricting ball touches to an absolute minimum. The logical conclusion is that coach has to either develop technical and micro-tactical strength in 1 v 1 situations but sacrifice 11 v 11 tactics, or nurture the ability to read 11 v 11 situations at the expense of elite 1 v 1 tactical perception. Surprisingly, there is a way to create a practice environment where both ball touches and tactical variables are challenged and developed to a greater degree than in the real game. If we assume that an average team practice attendance involves 15 or 16 players, this objective would at first seem impossible. But, when the real 11 v 11 game is examined, it can be seen that the greatest tactical challenge is encountered in and around the penalty area with multiple defenders and attackers plus the constraints of the offside rule. Here the tactical abilities of the player are not only challenged by numerous alternatives, (including shooting), but also by restrictions of space, time, psychological pressure and offside. Normally, there won’t be any more than 16 players in and around the penalty area in the full game. The goal of the coach is to establish combined technical and tactical demands greater than that encountered in the most challenging part of the 11 v 11 game. To do this he will need to create an environment that has the following characteristics:

- 2 full size goals
- 15 or 16 players all playing in the same area
- Simultaneous 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 small-sided games
- Small playing area between the goals
- Everyone playing on same small field
- Conditions that foster early decisions and maximize speed of play.

By adhering to the above points the coach will optimize ball touches and maximize the number of variables that must be constantly analyzed. This structure provides the most opportunity to attack or defend in 1 v 1 situations but also demands that all players continually think at speed to assess 15 other player variables and choose the best tactical solution. Because only 1 or 2 of the other players are immediate teammates or opponents, the coach maximizes the 1 v 1 technical and tactical benefit, plus the 11 v 11 decision making benefit, simultaneously.

**Important Quick Note:** Coaches can make a significant improvement in the tactical value of training by focusing upon multiple simultaneous 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 small-sided games during practice. Because 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 in a crowd is so difficult, the transfer of tactical training from 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 small-sided games in crowded areas to the full sided game, is maximal. If players are taught and challenged to assess, compute and utilize multiple tactical variables in a crowd under pressure in the clutch they will develop many times the creative tactical speed and effectiveness of players trained by more conventional tactical methods.
Chapter Sixty-Six

From Animal to Artist
Teaching Fast Mental Transition

The psychological continuum deals with the attitudinal components required by the competitive soccer environment. The psychological extremes in soccer vary from one end of the spectrum involving the most creative and artistic elements of the game, to the complete opposite which combine the aggressive and sometimes fiercely combative aspects of the sport. The more creative and artistic elements usually occur when the great dribbler and goal scorer is in possession of the ball. The more aggressive and combative game segments usually involve attempts to win the ball. The truly complete player is the one who is able to display both elite creative capabilities and optimal levels of aggressive behavior when appropriate. The required transition from artistic to aggressive usually needs to be instantaneous because the best time to recover the ball is commonly at the instant of lost possession. One thing that has become apparent from analysis is that ball wizards usually possess more creative and artistic psychological characteristics, whereas overt leadership behavior is more commonly exhibited by the more aggressive player.

The Conditioned Response: When creating the ideal psychological training environment for soccer, great coaches will need to assess the practice set up most conducive to conditioning:

- The quick/creative/artistic
- The aggressive/destructive
- The ability to transition between the two.

“What would it be like if you lived each day, each breath, as a work of art in progress? Imagine that you are a Masterpiece unfolding every second of every day, a work of art taking form with every breath.”

Thomas Crum

The structure of the environment, rules of the game and vehicles of assessment should all be chosen to condition and measure the incidence of appropriate psychological response. Risk, creativity, improvisation and speed should always be primary components of every training environment. Additionally, conditions that maximize ball touches, create turnovers and facilitate statistical assessment should be imposed.

“If we listened to our intellect, we’d never have a love affair. We’d never have a friendship. We’d never go into business, because we’d be cynical. Well, that's nonsense. You've got to jump off cliffs all the time and build your wings on the way down”.

Ray Bradbury
Important Quick Note: In conclusion coaches and players can make a significant increase in the development of appropriate creative or destructive psychological responses by focusing upon multiple simultaneous 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 small-sided games that generate turnovers and quick transitions between flair based and aggressive soccer behaviors. If, as players improve, conditions are imposed on the 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 to encourage the correct offensive and defensive responses, development will occur even more rapidly. If you have to transition and switch from offensive to defensive psychological modes to a factor many times greater than encountered in conventional practices and games, you will develop many times the psychological creativity or defensive destructive ability of the conventionally trained player.

“Real, constructive mental power lies in the creative thought that shapes your destiny, and your hour-by-hour mental conduct produces power for change in your life. Develop a train of thought on which to ride. The nobility of your life as well as your happiness depends upon the direction in which that train of thought is going.”

Laurence J Peter
Chapter Sixty-Seven

Fighting Fit – Specific Fitness For The Clutch

The physiological continuum encompasses the three physical systems involved in elite soccer. At one extreme is the dynamic short burst of power required for the dribbling move, power shot or explosive short sprint. At the opposite end of the spectrum comes the aerobic endurance needed for 90 minutes of almost continuous movement. In between is the secondary anaerobic capacity needed to sustain intense periods of sub-maximal work between 10 seconds and four minutes in length.

From a physiological perspective soccer is arguably the most demanding all round sport. This is because it uses a combination of all three energy systems, to the greatest combined degree, with the minimum recovery time. The energy systems used in soccer are:

- The primary anaerobic
- The secondary anaerobic
- The aerobic.

These can be alternatively defined as:

- Short term power (10 seconds or less)
- Mid-term power (approximately 10 seconds to 4 minutes)
- Long term stamina (upwards of approximately 4 minutes)

For 90 minutes the adult soccer player alternates between walking, jogging, running and sprinting. Throughout the game he will switch between energy modes in accordance with the demands of play and his own fitness level.

If practice demands are to exceed those of the real game the environment and imposed conditions must require intense aerobic demands, limited short term breaks in play and numerous segments of primary and secondary anaerobic overload interspersed with periods of less demanding active recovery. In practical terms this involves:

- Practices 10-15 minutes longer in duration than the real game at that age level
- Statistical recording breaks that approximate the length of time lost for ball out of play situations
- Technical requirements that require numerous energy sapping short term bursts of power, i.e. deceptive dribbling and tackling
- Practice segments of an intensity and length guaranteed to ensure anaerobic overload, (Usually between 3-4 minutes).

By structuring practice to include the above, players will be constantly subjected to greater primary anaerobic, secondary anaerobic and aerobic stress than encountered under game
conditions. This intense practice methodology is chosen because it is specific to the more demanding phases of the real game. A further benefit of this type of practice structure is the elimination of non-specific running for fitness. The need to supplement soccer specific training involving the ball and opposition with shuttle runs, beep tests, Fartlek, or other types of non-soccer specific fitness drills, is completely removed when the soccer specific exercises utilized maximize soccer specific fitness to a level that is significantly higher than needed in the real game.

Coaches who do not utilize the 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 “Training Soccer Legends” method to develop players have to sacrifice valuable technical and tactical practice time in favor of less beneficial non-soccer specific fitness training.

**Important Quick Note:** Coaches and players can make a significant improvement in fitness and efficiency of appropriate physiological responses by focusing upon a series of multiple simultaneous 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 small-sided games designed to:

- Maximize the number of primary anaerobic power actions
- Optimize high intensity effort for 10 seconds to 4 minute periods
- Stress the aerobic system for durations of between 50 and 90 minutes depending on the age and maturity of the players concerned.

As a result of the “Training Soccer Legends” method your players will develop soccer specific physiological fitness to a factor many times greater than that of conventionally trained players. Added to which the “Training Soccer Legends” method of getting fit is more enjoyable than conventional methods of fitness training where the players run for the last 20-30 minutes of practice and hate every minute.
Chapter Sixty-Eight

How To Teach Everything Altogether

1 v 1 and 2 v 2 small-sided games are ideal for integrating the technical, tactical, physiological and psychological continuums. To achieve maximum economy of training and get the optimum benefit from the technical, tactical, psychological and physical elements of soccer in every practice, each element must be present to the greatest possible degree in every practice situation. When examined from an economy and transfer of training perspective, a drill such as circle 5 v 2 passing is an extremely poor option. This is because it contains no shooting or dribbling, an unrealistic and limited level of tactical options, no quick transition from the creative to the aggressive, and no significant stress on any of the three energy systems. Certainly it is fun but so is 2 v 2 transition from goal to goal. The difference being that the latter offers all the “continuum” benefits detailed in this chapter while the former offers none.

Young players need to be constantly involved in an area that relates to their age and physical development. If more players are involved and get more touches they will learn and develop quicker. These days positive progress has resulted in most young players playing 3 v 3, 4 v 4, 6 v 6 & 8 v 8 as a stepping-stones to 11-a-side. Can it be long before the whole world recognizes that the optimum developmental situation is actually 1 v 1 followed by 2 v 2 in a crowd?

1 v 1 & 2 v 2 play generates many more match situations than 4 v 4, 8 v 8 or 11 v 11. It involves all the players with a high ratio of possession thereby guaranteeing maximum opportunity to problem-solve and learn, i.e. see it, make a decision and execute. Above all, 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 are fun games and kids love a game.

1 v 1 and 2 v 2 also have a simple frameworks where the players can concentrate on their own game and learn how to cope and deal with the problems at their own pace without being pressured to win. Problem solving and decision-making are vital ingredients to a player's development. Too often coaches make decisions for players by shouting instructions and advocating regimented responses. However, sometimes it's best for the coach/parent/friend to say nothing and let the player try to make the decision. In essence 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 authentically recreates the “street football” that was the breeding ground for most of the world’s great players. The notion of “street soccer” relates to players kicking a ball about on a local road using coats or walls as goals. This, it's argued with some justification, helped young players develop their skills and helped develop great players in the past.

Manchester United piloted a 4 v 4 program for its Under 9's. Rick Fenoglio of Manchester Metropolitan University writes: “A fundamental concept guiding the primary developers of the scheme was the replication, as much as possible, of the playing environments in which the world's greatest players first learned and then developed the skills they needed for top-level performance. To accomplish this the scheme has incorporated some of the competitive values
and best features of youth football as it used to be played in the parks, playgrounds, streets, and back alleys around the world, into the more formalized structure of modern academy football.”

Players need to be involved and smaller numbers allow them to do this. Being constantly involved will mean they learn quicker and have more fun doing so. This of course is common sense and can be applied to all aspects of life and learning. We all like to be involved in an activity and the more we are involved the more we enjoy and learn from it.

The “Training Soccer Legends” approach recognizes the truth of Manchester United and Rick Fenoglio’s assertions but believes that traditional “street soccer” was more of a 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 than 4 v 4 nature. It is my belief that the doubling and quadrupling of touches and tactical challenges involved in 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 is what truly propelled the world’s superstars to the phenomenal foundation of technical and tactical brilliance needed to play at the very top.

Learning is influenced by a variety of factors; e.g. the environment, information available, the individual’s learning capacity, the support of peers and family. However, in this instance 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 establishes a better learning environment than 4 v 4 or any other larger number game. This is vitally important to player development.

The following is a great soccer article that reinforces the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy:

This article, written by UEFA technical director and Ex Scottish National Team Coach – Andy Roxburgh, appeared as the editorial in the UEFA publication "The Technician"

“Time for self-expression
It was lunchtime in Turin, and while others around the table spoke about the UEFA Champions League match which would take place that evening in the Stadio Delle Alpi between Juventus FC and Manchester United FC, Roberto Bettega, Juve's vice-chairman and former star player, talked to me about street football.

“Although I was attached to this club from the age of nine years, much of my development took place in the streets. It was there that I practised and refined my basic skills,” said Roberto, who won seven championships for the “Old Lady” of Turin and represented Italy on 42 occasions.

What troubles Roberto, who played alongside Michel Platini, Paolo Rossi, Zbigniew Boniek and other icons of the game, is the dominating style of many youth coaches. With the passion of a street fighter, he added: “Young players need some time for self-expression, for spontaneity. Their coaches need to watch and listen more and instruct a little less.”

Valid philosophy
In many parts of Europe, street football has all but disappeared, but the philosophy and the mentality remains valid. The street game was player-centered, competitive, skilful and fair, and the small-sided game, with one-on-one a key element, was the basic form of play. Youngsters practised for hours on tricks and on passing and shooting techniques, using a wall as their silent partner. A love of football permeated all activities, and cups and medals (extrinsic motivation) had no immediate significance for the fierce young dreamers who were dedicated to the ball and lost in the romance of the game. Football leaders are acutely aware that the loss of the street environment, particularly in industrial regions, has provoked a greater need for training
facilities, free-play areas, and appropriate equipment. But equally, there is an increasing demand for well-educated coaches who have the specific knowledge and the ability to work with young players. Just as the smart referee knows the difference between a foul, a dive and a legitimate tackle, so the sensitive youth coach understands when to drill, when to teach creatively, and when to encourage self-reliance and free expression.

**Football maxim**

Every player, even the stars, were once grass-roots players. Every Sunday morning, as a youngster, Michael Owen of Liverpool FC played two v two games with his father and two elder brothers. Ronaldo claimed that his ‘toe-poke’ goal against Turkey in the semi-final of the FIFA World Cup was the product of his small-sided experiences as a young player. Wayne Rooney, Everton FC's 17-year-old striker, who recently became the youngest player to play for England, still plays 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 in the streets with his friends. It is a football maxim: if the grass roots are strong, then the game will grow and blossom.

**Street mentality**

As facilities improve and programmes become more sophisticated, there is the danger that some will lose sight of the heart and soul of the game. Coaches who have a street mentality, who appreciate the value of free play, self-expression, and passion, will never allow the game to become sterile and mechanical. The Japanese have a saying: “You are never too old to have a happy childhood.” For the youth coach, this translates into a simple message; stay young at heart. It is a sentiment that Roberto Bettega would fully endorse.

Even though 4 v 4 is a decent tool for player development 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 guarantees twice to four times as many touches on the ball and consequently twice to four times as many tactical decision making opportunities for the first and second attacker. This makes it a great tool for player development. It is also extremely mentally and physically challenging. How often in your training session does the player have to make first attacker and first defender decisions so common to street soccer? How often does the player have to evaluate and interpret information and adjust quickly in crucial positions and roles? Line drills and high player to ball ratio practices in which the coach has limited predetermined goals dominate too many practices. The “Training Soccer Legends” method is the only published program that truly addresses these issues.

**Important Quick Note:** In the same way that the modern day educational system has identified a set curriculum for teaching kids to read, the Legends Soccer Club has established a curriculum that marries 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 with the very best sequential progression for developing a player capable of utilizing the technical skills, tactical speed, physical fitness, mental speed and toughness needed to play at the very highest level. This involves focusing on optimizing the techniques and tactics needed to dominate the penalty area offensively and defensively. This process is a constant focus from when the player first touches a ball to when that player leaves youth soccer. Players who are capable of dominating the penalty area will find the easier skills involved in the mid-field simple by comparison. However, when called upon to beat a player and score a great goal they will be able to do so. That's how to train a “Soccer Legend!”
A Great Assessment of the Situation

I don’t know where this came from but it sums up the Brazilian and ‘Training Soccer Legends’ philosophical difference.

“Brazilians play a lot of 1-on-1. And they don’t suck
Ronaldo. Ronaldinho. Roberto Carlos. Denilson. Play against them. Put the ball at their feet and they will make you weep. You will swear they are going to their left, and they will go to the right. You will swear they are going to their right, and they will go to the left. And your legs will be twisted and you will fall and you will mess your pants and 60,000 people in the stands will put their arms on each other’s shoulders and sing a song about your twisted legs, your falling, and your smelly, messed pants. “But it’s no fair,” you will say. “They have those super soccer Brazilian genes and chromosomes. Or some kind of soccer enhancement surgery before they’re two.” And you will be wrong. These guys have played one-on-one since they were little Brazilian babies and could walk up and do a step-over with their blocks. Think about it. If you can play one-on-one, you touch the ball ALL THE Time. Your touch gets better. Your moves get better. Your creativity and improvisation get better. If you play 11-on-11, then this happens: Here comes the ball! Trap! Pass 100 times! Little improvement. If you play one-on-one when you do play a game of 11-on-11, you’ll be that much better. Brazil wouldn’t have held up five World Cups over their heads if they hadn’t played so much individual soccer first. Shrink your game: One opponent. A small patch of ground. And a ball. Soon enough, you’ll get to shorten your name to one word and put an “o” on the end.

Play the game, make a run! Ball goes to the other side of the field! Annnd…you pick your nose. Because that ball may not come back for five or more minutes—if you’re lucky. (Go stand still for five minutes right now and see how long that is). One-on-one means you need only one more person to play with. You must know one person. Or at least a dog. Well, get him, make a couple of goals, and beat him. Make him beat you. First one to 100 wins. Or don’t score. Just make your opponent look stupid. First one to look stupid loses. Your touch. Your vision. Your confidence. Your deception. Will just keep on getting better. You know it makes sense!!”

Author Unknown
Chapter Sixty-Nine

A Snap Shot of the Legends Curriculum

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”
Ralph Waldo Emerson

The “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum is very simple to understand because there are only three fundamental practice stages as follows:

- Technical Skill Learning Stage
- 1 v 1 Stage
- 2 v 2 Stage

During the early years the Legends program focuses exclusively on the two most difficult technical skill areas in soccer, i.e. deceptive dribbling and shooting. As a side benefit of focusing exclusively on teaching deceptive dribbling and finishing, the players automatically develop tremendous ability to pass. Have you ever known a great goal scorer who couldn't pass? Furthermore, great dribblers possess superb agility, co-ordination, balance, touch, strength and deception under pressure. These are the physical qualities necessary to be a supreme receiver of the ball therefore, because deceptive dribbling is a far more difficult technical skill, the skills of receiving are also developed by working on deceptive dribbling. The in-depth reasons why great goal scorers automatically become excellent passers and talented dribblers develop simultaneously into superb receivers are discussed in other parts of this book.

In the technical stage the moves taught are the Fake Shot, Maradona Turn, Cruyff Turn, Rivelino, Puskas, Matthews, Swivel Step-over, Scissors, Matthews/Scissors, Double Scissors, Pull Back Behind the Leg, Tap and Play Behind the Leg, Stop Hop and Roll, Swivel/Swivel, plus Reverse Matthews/Ronaldinho. The shooting techniques we teach in this stage are the power drive, banana shot, full-volley, side-volley, half-volley, chip, inside of foot finish & outside of foot finish.

The first technical priority is teaching the moves. This is because all release skills are dependent on the correct position and relationship between ball and body. The best way to teach the physical components essential to elite ball and body control is to educate players how to perform the most effective moves containing those components at speed. The shooting stage of the curriculum follows closely behind the learning of the moves. As players progress, both deceptive dribbling and shooting skills are refined and enhanced in the 1 v 1 stage of the “Training Soccer Legends” program. Here the focus is on developing tremendous 1 v 1 dribbling and goal-scoring ability under close pressure from one opponent.

The added bonus is that because our players spend so much time in the 1 v 1 environment they develop the ability to stop even the most creative attackers from penetrating. As a consequence
the “Training Soccer Legends” approach develops 5 skill areas, i.e. dribbling, shooting, receiving, passing and defending/tackling, for the time cost normally spent on just two of those areas in traditional methods. However, it is vital to understand that the two skills we spend all our time on are the "big play" ones. Deceptive dribbling creates defensive havoc by beating a player, while finishing achieves the ultimate objective of the game, i.e. scoring goals. Deceptive dribbling and shooting also demand great self-confidence and leadership. These are also the two skills that the players love to practice and the skills that build the greatest self-esteem. What a deal!! If you practice the Legends way your players will develop five skills for the time cost of two, plus high self-esteem and the ability to make the plays that win games.

“Where talent is a dwarf, self-esteem is a giant.”
J. Petit-Senn, Conceits and Caprices

Once the players have developed a very good understanding of all the desired 1 v 1 technical and tactical characteristics, the “Training Soccer Legends” focus progresses into 2 v 2 combination play. At this stage the Legends program believes wholeheartedly in 2 v 2 practice as the method of maximizing the clutch areas of a players game. In 2 v 2 each player enjoys 25% of the total practice time on the ball, or in one of the key positions in relation to the ball, therefore, because college coaches offer scholarships primarily based on a player’s ability with and effective positioning in relation to the ball and one opponent, 2 v 2 soccer gives each player the maximum possible ball to player ratio while practicing to play team soccer. 25% of the total time spent on the ball, or in a key position in relation to the ball, is the maximum attainable “key position” ratio in a realistic practice situation that also offers shooting, passing and dribbling options at all times. In the “Training Soccer Legends” 2 v 2 practice philosophy two whole squads practice together and the players are challenged to play multiple simultaneous 2 v 2 match ups where space and time are at an extreme premium and lightning fast tactical decisions and technical actions are essential to success. In every practice the players are challenged to make infinitely more tactical decisions under pressure than they will ever do in an 11 v 11 game. This objective is achieved by positioning two goals no more than 25 yards apart, crowding the area in front of goal by playing everyone at the same time, and mandating the use of specific conditions designed to encourage penetration by means of a quick shot, pass or dribble on every possession. The combination plays taught and mandated are; wall pass, wall pass fake, double pass, takeover, overlap and overlap fake.

When performing combination plays the tremendous individual deceptive dribbling skills that Legends players have previously developed really pay off. This is because extremely difficult combination plays in limited space can only be set up and performed by players with great dribbling skills and accurate ball striking ability under pressure. It is during the 2 v 2 combination stage of the curriculum that the accurate quick release finishing and deceptive dribbling ability that Legends players develop in the first two phases of the curriculum really pay off. Without this training players are unable to make the minute adjustments to ball and body position at speed necessary for setting up the perfect combination play in traffic or for combining with each other to devastating effect. Programs that don't first spend the necessary time on developing fantastic deceptive dribblers and goal scorers cannot hope to impress to the same
degree as a team, or compete at the same level individually for college scholarships, in the way that players who have completed the Legends program can. At age 17 players who have trained extensively in the Legends method play faster, have greater confidence, look better on the ball, score goals, beat players, defend well in 1 v 1 match ups and combine in and around the opponent's penalty area to create goal scoring opportunities. When a player can do all these very difficult things everything else is easy. Skill acquisition “transfer of training” benefits are many times faster and greater when players focus on the more complex skills containing the neuromuscular patterns of simpler soccer techniques. In simple terms, players develop all the skills as a result of practicing exclusively on the most difficult. This accelerated learning factor is why, as the central theme of each player’s youth soccer career, the Legends curriculum emphasizes teaching and enhancing the “big play” super skills that carry over, or transfer, into the easier skills of the game.

Initially the Legends program develops the most complex individual clutch skills of deceptive dribbling and finishing. After these skills have been acquired to a satisfactory level the “Training Soccer Legends” program focuses on teaching players to exploit them tactically. This is achieved by escalating the complexity and repetition of ever more complex individual tactical equations in the 1 v 1 situation. Eventually the program progresses to developing intuitive creative solutions in even more complex 2 v 2 tactical situations. Throughout the whole process, players are gradually “operant conditioned” to perform appropriate creative and destructive responses instantaneously. This is achieved by mandating quick decisions and actions, e.g. an early shot, pass or fake. The “Training Soccer Legends 2 v 2 approach emphasizes a 1 ball to 4 player ratio while demanding the quickest tactical responses. This is achieved by organizing round robin tournament style practices where everyone plays simultaneous 2 v 2 games. Later in this book a 2 v 2 round robin “match-up” table and record sheet is provided for all possible practice permutations. With this efficient and challenging creative structure, the coach can create a more complex tactical challenge that is constantly more beneficial than any ever encountered in the 11 v 11 game. The “Training Soccer Legends” program achieves this by practicing two teams and multiple players together. This forces the players to utilize maximum cognition, perception, assimilation and task selection abilities, under extreme levels of pressure at every moment during practice. Because of the structure and inherent or conditioned demands, Legends players face practice expectations significantly in excess of anything they will ever face in the game situation. After doing this for a few years the “real game” is a technical, tactical, physiological and psychological “walk in the park” to the Legends trained player.

The players love it. They spend their time playing an exciting version of the game in a crowd where their and their opponent’s goals are only twenty to twenty five yards apart. Every second of each 2 v 2 match up they are optimally challenged to perform “Big Play” creative offensive and clutch defensive skills under extreme pressure.
Chapter Seventy

The Unique Legends Practice Structure Explained

The typical practice should adopt and follow and adopt selected parts of the “Sequential Progression” to coaching. The full sequential progression is outlined as follows:

Sequential Progression To Coaching Soccer Skills & Tactics

1. Warm up involves dynamic stretching at the younger ages (pre growth spurt) this is achieved by performing fast footwork, fakes and moves. During and post growth spurt warm ups should involve fast footwork, strength and plyometric exercises. Static stretching is discouraged as a precursor to dynamic competition because it inhibits subsequent muscle reaction and increases the risk of injury. However, static stretching is recommended at all other times to increase overall flexibility and range of joint motion.

2. Static Technique – Training technical practice requirements of the given skill, with limited balanced & rhythmic movement but no opposition.

3. Dynamic Technique – Training technical practice requirements of the given skill, with dynamic and powerful movement - without opposition.

4. Pressure Training – Training technical practice requirements of the given skill under the pressure of time limitations and/or fatigue. “When fatigue steps in skill steps out”. Test and develop skill at speed as players tire.


6. Active Skill Stage - Developing to a full and active defense.

7. Fun Game – At the younger ages split your session up with a skill related fun game. This stage is the only one that does not have to follow the numerical sequence. It should be inserted into the practice at approximately the halfway point to give the players a mental break and to get them in the right frame of mind for the hard work in the 2nd half. The fun game should be selected to enhance the skill worked on. Note this is especially valuable when coaching very young players.

8. Conditioned Game - Small sided games with specific restrictions e.g. one touch, two touch, fake and move within two touches.

9. Real Game - A very short full-sided game.

10. Cool down & static stretch - Get rid of the chemical by-products of exercise.

11. Re-Cap - A quick briefing regarding the main points of the session.

12. Homework – Assignment of specific skills and drills to be practiced at home.
Chapter Seventy-One

Pick the Right Parts of the Legends Practice Sequence

Perhaps the most important point to be made about the sequential progression is that all the above stages should not be part of one single coaching session. Instead each training session progression is part of a long-term plan or model that covers several years. The stages of the progression chosen in each practice should optimize the speed of development. Selection of the mix, content and duration of sequential progression stages will determine whether player development is maximized. To illustrate the above points let us examine a possible dribbling practice for a technically limited U5-U10 group, which would include stages 7, 2, 3, 7, 5 & 8 in that sequence, with 65% of the session devoted to the static and dynamic dribbling technique stages, (2 & 3). Compare this to a practice for an accomplished U18 team which would be more suited to stages 1, 8, 10, 11 & 12 with 75% of the session devoted to stage 7 i.e. the 2 v 2 highly conditioned and statistically evaluated small sided game stage. As abilities in each technical stage improve, the amount of practice time devoted to that stage diminishes. This constantly changing allocation of practice time should reflect the current performance and needs of the players when evaluated against the long-term plan. By this I mean that the intelligent coach will avoid changing practice content significantly as a result of one heavy defeat or phenomenal win. The intelligent coach will base close to 100% of practice content choices upon practice performance rather than game conditions. This is because individual game performance can be heavily influenced by a significant variation in opposition from one game to the next and developmental priorities are most effectively taught as part of a sequential, well planned curriculum.

An example of a dribbling practice at the elementary level would be as follows:

- Fun game till all kids arrive
- Static technique work on the Maradona Turn
- Dynamic technique work on Maradona Turn emphasizing speed throughout and explosion away from the move
- Fun game to regenerate motivation
- Pressure training i.e. how many technically correct moves the players can do in a minute. Carry out 3 or 4 separate one-minute assessments and ask each player to beat their previous score in the subsequent minute.
- Passive skill stage with opposition e.g. a set up with all kids in a small grid. Ask the kids to count how many good moves they can do in a minute with less space available. Any time their ball or body comes into contact with another the move does not count. Again carry out 3 or 4 separate one-minute assessments and ask each player to beat their previous score in the subsequent minute.
- Fun game to leave the kids with a positive memory and make them want to come back next time.
Chapter Seventy-Two

Weekly 2 v 2 Games Are Essential

The Legends club philosophy is unique in many positive ways. One of the unique attributes is the 2 v 2 game session we hold every Saturday morning for all our players. No other coaching staff I am aware of takes the time and trouble to add another weekend responsibility and arrange league and tournament commitment around staffing Saturday morning 2 v 2’s to provide an extra developmental opportunity for their players.

Saturday morning 2 v 2’s are vital to the development of the highly skilled team leader because they provide the essential bridge between the creative individual dribbling and shooting development we focus on during the mid-week practices and the league game on the weekend. Without a 2 v 2 “bridge” our players have a much tougher time utilizing the Legends dribbling fakes and shooting skills in the big game situation. With the 2 v 2 bridge practice, the extremely difficult dribbling and shooting skills we emphasize so enthusiastically, transfer much more quickly and effectively into the real game situation.

The Legends approach to playing soccer builds on the theme that every player is the team’s quarterback when in possession of the ball. The mid-week practices focus intensely upon developing the individual techniques and skills that a great “soccer quarterback” will need in the game situation. The weekend 2 v 2 provides the practical perspective that accelerates the understanding of how to apply those skills effectively in the game situation.

The Legends approach is to concentrate relentlessly on the most difficult and complicated skills in the most challenging and confusing area of the field. Saturday morning 2 v 2’s speed up the process of being able to make big plays using those skills under intense game pressure. Statistically the 2 v 2 situation gives the player 25% of ball possession during each game. When compared to the 3 v 3 situation, 2 v 2 enhances individual skill acquisition 50%. When compared to 4 v 4 the skill acquisition ratio of 2 v 2 is 100% better. Therefore, 2 v 2 provides each player at least half or double again the skill development when compared with the other close variations of the small-sided game. The unique “Training Soccer Legends” system guarantees that each player will play every minute of 2 v 2, thereby maximizing learning time by eliminating time lost because of substitutions and waiting one’s turn to play.

A further benefit of the 2 v 2 is that, as players mature, it provides the ideal environment to develop the wall pass, wall pass fake, overlap, overlap fake, double pass and takeover plays. These are the six most effective ways of combining with a teammate to penetrate an opponent’s defense.

A gigantic further benefit of the Legends 2 v 2’s is the close proximity of both goals. Playing with two goals spaced 20-25 yards apart so that players can play a realistic end-to-end transition
game yet always have the opportunity to shoot, is a vital aspect of developing the self-belief necessary to become a goal scorer. When goals are positioned so that all players are constantly within shooting distance, all players will acquire the instinct to shoot quickly and consequently develop to their full goal scoring potential.

**Timing is everything**
The placement and timing of the weekly 2 v 2’s guarantees that each week’s practice structure builds sequentially towards the “big game” later that weekend. The mid-week individual practices are designed and structured to build into the 2 v 2’s, and the 2 v 2’s are timed to occur 4 to 32 hours prior to each league game. This means that any player who attends both mid-week practice sessions and the 2 v 2’s will be maximally prepared to make use of the Training Soccer Legends, “big play game winning super skills” under pressure, in the competitive cauldron, on match day. The reinforcement that accrues from being completely prepared and consequentially more successful in games, feeds into a positive motivational spiral that significantly accelerates skill acquisition and self-belief, plus the willingness to take responsibility and lead.

**Important Quick Note:** In summary the benefits of Saturday morning 2 v 2’s are as follows:
- It provides the essential bridge between practices and the “big game”.
- It accelerates the essential development of the skill and vision under pressure necessary to be a “soccer quarterback”.
- The 25% ball ratios provide a significant degree of guaranteed possession and far greater individual skill development than traditional small-sided games with higher numbers.
- It creates the ideal environment for learning to combine with teammates while also enjoying a high ratio of ball possession and developing great individualism.
- There are no substitutions so every moment is a learning opportunity and games are more fun.
- It provides maximal preparation for the game later that weekend. This leads to greater confidence and willingness to take creative and positive developmental risks under pressure.

As a result of the above rationale we hope you can see how important Saturday 2 v 2 game sessions in the weekly curriculum and make an extra special effort to get all your players to attend on a regular basis.
Chapter Seventy-Three

Dribbling – Fast, Entertaining and Exciting

During the “Technical Learning Stage” the emphasis is on learning the most effective techniques of world-class dribblers and finishers.

There is nothing more exciting than watching a player dribbling the ball. The ability to manipulate the ball makes a player that can perform this “art” special in many people's eyes. Christiano Ronaldo mesmerizes Manchester United fans with his ability and the “tricks” he can perform to beat players. Joe Cole at Chelsea is a great dribbler. That was one of the main attractions for Claudio Ranieri when he bought him. “I need a player who can dribble and I think Joe Cole is that kind of player,” said Ranieri as he snapped up the England midfielder from West Ham in the summer of 2003. “In my opinion, he can play in any midfield position from the left to the right, or behind the front two. He's fantastic one-on-one. He's very clever and passes the ball very well. I like him when a match is close. He can dribble, pass and score a goal. He's strong and an Englishman.” Ranieri is not the only coach to appreciate such skills. When talking about Ronaldinho, Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard knew he’d signed a player of pure quality. “We all know Ronny has something very special,” said the former Dutch international. “When he gets the ball he can create chances from nothing. He got the assist for our first goal and when he started to attack he looked very good.”

The skills demonstrated by Joe Cole, Ronaldo and other great stars such as Alessandro Del Piero (Italy), Robinho (Brazil) and Thierry Henry (France) are not only attractive to watch. Such skillful players are also seen as an essential ingredient in top teams. How do we encourage young players to dribble the ball in youth soccer? We must demand that they dribble with the ball when the opportunity arises. Too often coaches actually discourage players from dribbling the ball, insist that they pass instead, and thereby discourage them from trying to learn fakes and moves.

The reason for this in the game situation is the high-risk nature of the strategy. Risky plays can lose games therefore coaches are reluctant to allow their players to take risks. They certainly won’t demand it. This is because they too often prize the win instead of development.

Youth soccer should be about developing the potential of young players. If young players are encouraged to pass the ball, or 'get rid of it', every time they are in possession, the skill of dribbling will be lost and individual potential severely restricted. Coaches must be brave and sometimes sacrifice short-term objectives in order to achieve long-term goals.

“Slumber not in the tents of your fathers. The world is advancing. Advance with it.”
Giuseppe Mazzini, (Italian revolutionary, d. 1872)

At a very young age players should be encouraged to try amazing things with the ball. This often
means dribbling and attempting the world’s most difficult fakes until they lose the ball. Over time, with appropriate coaching, these players will then be able to identify when to run, dribble, pass or shoot the ball and do so effectively. Therefore, the coach who expects and demands that her players take great risks while dribbling the ball gives them every opportunity to develop the tremendous ball control and individual touch that carries over into all facets of the game.

England's 2002 World Cup defeat by Brazil is a fine example of how a great dribbler can decide a game at the highest level. The first Brazilian goal was created by a Ronaldinho dribble. He picked the ball up just inside his half and dribbled it past two defenders, beating the 2nd, Ashley Cole, with a tremendous scissors move. Because of the danger he presented he forced Rio Ferdinand and Sol Campbell, the two English central defenders, to collapse into the middle. He then supplied Rivaldo with a killer pass that was perfectly aimed and weighted for the first time scoring shot.

If Ronaldinho were English he would have probably been conditioned to pass the ball early in every possession and the opportunity to decide the game would have been lost. Young players outside of Brazil and some African countries are encouraged to pass the ball too often and don't develop the skills we witness in many Brazilians. Coaches in countries worldwide wonder why they can’t produce players like the Brazilians. The main reason is the prevalent coaching culture. Too often players are not encouraged and/or expected to dribble the ball with deception. This is a mentality that needs to be addressed. To be fair some coaches are attempting to address it but don’t understand the best way to teach this special skill to players. Unfortunately most coaches can still be heard shouting “PASS, PASS, PASS” or “Keep it simple”, from the sidelines. While this continues the next “Joe Cole” will have to emerge despite the coaching, not because of it.

The game of soccer is a series of 1 v 1 battles all over the field. The true greats have always been the players who can find a way to beat an opponent with the ball and score. Because it is the most effective way to create offensive “overload”, where the attacking team enjoys a numerical advantage, all coaches should instill the ability to beat opponents into every player they train. From day one young players should be encouraged to take opponents on whenever possible. Over time the great technical dribbler can be taught how to make the correct choice of when and where to dribble. However, this can only be taught once dribbling technique mastery is already in place. The modern soccer world craves adult players that excite the crowds with deceptive dribbling and great goals, however in the junior ranks the “greedy hot dogs” are vilified for not passing. The “Training Soccer Legends” method re-addresses this imbalance and creates exciting dribblers who have been brought up in a culture that encourages players to take risks from an early age. Coaches must insist that young players constantly experiment with the art of dribbling in practice and game situations. When doing so the players will excite the fans and frighten the opposition. At times they will make mistakes that are punished with an opposition score. However, in the long run they will reap the immense benefit of having more ways to penetrate the opposition’s defense.

The following section of the book illustrates how practices should be planned and provides sample sessions for the coach looking for more specific information.
Chapter Seventy-Four

The Legends Way to Teach Dribbling

Here is a practice progression to help you with "on the field" ideas for the kids.

An example of a dribbling practice progression would be as follows:

1. Warm up: Fun game for younger players till all kids arrive: “Pirates in the Sea” works well for younger players. Fakes and moves with dynamic strength & plyometrics for older players. In the fakes and moves warm up the coach or chosen player calls the move to be worked on and the players perform the specific move until the next move is called. In the fun warm up game “Pirates in the Sea” the coach uses cones to mark a grid. To earn points the player and her ball must stay in the grid. Each player has a ball and counts each technically correct move they perform as one point. Each player can kick another player’s ball out of the grid. Moves can only be counted if performed inside the grid. Games are timed. At the conclusion of each game each player quickly states her score.

2. Static Technique: Technical practice requirements of the given skill, with limited balanced & rhythmic movement but no opposition: Break the move down into four slow stages and make sure each child is performing those stages with technical efficiency. An example of this would be the slow repetition of a Fake Shot move until the basic movement pattern can be put under the pressure of greater speed. Please note: When demonstrating moves the coach should often turn his back to the player because this allows the player to copy without having to “mirror image” the action. Even 3 year olds can play “follow the leader” and learn a difficult skill if the coach demonstrates skills while facing away from the pupil.

3. Dynamic Technique: Technical practice requirements of the given skill, with dynamic and powerful movement but still no opposition. Here the players are asked to improve their move at speed while retaining technical efficiency. While this is occurring the coach needs to watch players closely and correct.

4. Pressure Training - This develops the technical requirements of the given skill under the pressure of fatigue. This exercise tests the “when fatigue steps in skill steps out” theory and pushes back the threshold for technique breakdown. One excellent way to improve performance at speed with intensity of effort and growing fatigue is to run a countdown alarm wristwatch and see how many technically excellent moves each player can do in 60 seconds. For younger players with limited counting ability 30 seconds will be enough. The initial moves should be crisp, however as the clock winds down it will take a greater mental effort to retain technical perfection due to the onset of fatigue.
5. If necessary another fun game to regenerate motivation. With younger players split your session up by using a fun game that involves the skill they’ve been working on. This stage is the only one that does not have to follow the numerical sequence. It should be inserted into the practice at whatever point that the players need a mental break. It gets them in the right frame of mind and prepares them for the hard work in the rest of the practice. The fun game should be selected to enhance the skill worked on. Note this is especially valuable when coaching younger players.

There are a myriad of fun games that can be conditioned to include a specific move before the ball is shot or passed. These include Crab Tackle, Foxes and Rabbits, Wembley, Knock Out, Pirates in the Sea and others too numerous to mention here. It is beyond the scope of this book to list the alternatives. There are many soccer drills and games books on the market that detail a wide variety of options.

6. First Skill Stage: Introduction of opposition - initially very passive defense. In a dribbling progression the objective is to increase the pressure on the dribbler by using gradually more difficult drills until she can enjoy success while playing 1 v 1 in a crowded penalty area. The first opposition stage might be where two players perform the same move around each other. This is the “Mirror stage”. Set up two players so that they can perform the chosen move in such a way that if performed correctly they will “beat” or “go past” each other. Depending on the move the players may set up facing each other (e.g. in the Matthews, Scissors or Maradona) or on a 45 degree diagonal to each other (e.g. in the Puskas or Pull-back behind the leg) or sideways on to each other (e.g. in the “Tap N Play Behind”) or back to back (e.g. in the Cruyff Turn).

6. Second Skill Stage: Non-directional dynamic skill stage with opposition e.g. set up the players in a small grid. Ask the kids to count how many good moves they can do in a minute with less space available. Any time their ball or body comes into contact with another ball or body the move does not count. Again carry out 3 or 4 separate one-minute assessments and ask each player to beat their previous score in the subsequent minute.

7. Directional dynamic skill stage. E.g. use cones to set up a row of three grids with a goal 10 yards from the end line of the last grid. Put one defender in each of the first two grids. At first cripple the defender by making him hold one foot with one hand and hop. Tackles can only be made with the hopping foot. Second allow the defender to hop on both feet and keep hands to side (Like a carrot), tackles are made by using both feet simultaneously. Third, allow the defender to be a “crab” with only hands and feet touching the ground, tackles are made only with the feet. Fourth, defender can now run around but can only get in the way of the dribbler, i.e. can’t put the feet out to tackle. Fifth, full contact defending. Note defender must always stay in grid for all five stages. Dribblers (all players except for defenders) must start at “The Gate” i.e. the line between the two cones of the first grid furthest away from the goal. The dribblers must perform one designated “move of the day” in each of the first two grids. The dribbler must shoot from inside the third grid. If the ball leaves any grid before the shot is taken the dribbler has to return to the start and re-enter the grids through the “start gate”. Each player gets
one point for a successful “grid run and goal”. After scoring each player returns up either side of the grids and re-enters the “grid avenue” through the gate. Run this drill for two to three minutes at a time before switching defenders.

8. End the session with a fun game or conditioned game. This leaves the kids with a positive memory and makes them want to come back next time. Conditioned Game - Small sided games (1 v 1 or 2 v 2) with specific restrictions, e.g. one touch, two touch, fake and move within two touches (explained later). Once great technical skill has been acquired, the conditioned game is the cornerstone of the Legends philosophy. This is where the players learn to use their skill at speed, while also doing the tactical things that need to become automatic under big game conditions.
Chapter Seventy-Five

The 12 Best Moves Legends Style

Please note: Clips of all moves can be downloaded and viewed at the KC Legends Soccer Club web site - www.kclegends.com/content/videos.cfm

There are four stages to learning a most moves as follows:

1. Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).
2. Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.
3. Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.
4. Final explosive finish to the move.

Fake Shot

1. Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).
   Place the standing foot 9 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a powerful shot.
2. Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.
   Accelerate the foot forward rapidly as if shooting. At the last second pull the toe up and make slight contact with the sole of the foot on the ball. Note: Stay on your toes throughout the move.
   This fake has only two stages because it is a precursor to other moves.
   Please note: Once the “Fake Shot” has been incorporated with the other 4 moves you integrate its practice and use with those moves instead of practicing it separately.

Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move

- When opponent is approaching
- Immediately prior to such moves as the Puskas, Pullback and Maradona to add an extra degree of deception.

Fake Shot and Pullback & Play With Outside Of Foot or Puskas

1. Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).
   Place the standing foot 9 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a powerful shot.
2. Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.
   Rapidly bring the foot forward as if shooting. At the last second pull the toe up and make slight contact with the sole of the foot on the ball.
3. Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.
   Pull the ball back alongside the standing foot. As you pull the ball back hop backwards away from the ball so that the standing foot is always well behind and approximately 45 degrees to the outside of the ball.
4. Final explosive finish to the move.
   To complete the move, play the ball away from the line of the pull back at a 90 degree or greater angle with the outside of the same foot that you pulled the ball back with. Explode for 5 yards to complete the move. Stay on your toes during move.
Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
- Moving diagonally across field at a slower pace with some separation from a recovering defender.
- In front of goal with a fake shot to get a defender to commit before changing direction and shooting.

Fake Shot, Pullback and Play Behind Leg
1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**
   Place the standing foot 9 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a powerful shot.
2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**
   Rapidly bring the foot forward as if shooting. At the last second pull the toe up and make slight contact with the sole of the foot on the ball.
3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.**
   Pull the ball back alongside the standing foot until it is approximately 12 inches past the standing leg. Bring the inside mid-point of foot you pulled the ball back with to the outside of the ball. Keep the heel low and the toe up.
4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**
   Play the ball with the mid-point of the foot across the back of the standing leg at a ninety-degree angle or greater to the original pull back direction. Explode for 5 yards to finish. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
- Moving diagonally across field at a slower pace with a defender in close proximity.
- In front of goal with a fake shot to get a defender to commit before changing direction and shooting.

Fake Shot and Maradona Turn
1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**
   Place the standing foot 9 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a powerful shot.
2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**
   Place the standing foot 24 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a pass and bring the foot forward rapidly as if about to strike the ball, while reaching across and in front of the body. At the last second pull the toe up and make solid contact with the sole of the foot on the ball. Pull the ball back 2 feet towards the standing foot and replace the initial position of the ball on the ground with the “pull back” foot while rotating that foot 90 degrees inwards and positioning the hip of that leg towards the opponent as you turn. If using the left foot turn the foot and body to your right. If using the right foot turn your foot and body to your left. Lift the arm nearest the defender and bend it at the elbow so that the outside of the forearm can protect you from the defender’s challenge.
3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.**
Lean towards the eventual direction of the play away and away from the ball during the move. As you are pulling the ball back and replacing the initial position of the ball on the ground with the “pull back” foot, lift the sole of the original “standing foot” on top of the ball.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**

At the point of the rotation that your body reaches 270 degrees of turn roll the ball away rapidly with the sole of the foot that is now on top of the ball, at a ninety-degree angle from the line of the initial pull back. Finally, explode for five yards to finish off the move and catch up with the play away. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

**Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move**
- Moving diagonally across field at a medium pace with a slight separation from a recovering defender. Most effective with a fake shot or pass.
- Attacking one side of a defender at speed to force a commitment before performing the move.
- In front of goal with a fake shot to get a defender to commit before changing direction and shooting.
- Standing still with a “bait” touch to one side of the defender to get defender to commit.

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**Fake Shot and Stop, Hop & Play**

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**

As you are running forward with the ball place the standing foot 9 inches behind the ball. Withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up for a powerful shot.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**

Rapidly bring the foot forward as if shooting. At the last second pull the toe up and stop the ball with the sole of the foot.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.**

Hop alongside the ball with the standing leg while simultaneously pulling the foot that stopped the ball to a position just behind the ball. As you are pulling the foot back behind the ball, rotate the toe outwards.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**

Using the inside of that foot, play the ball away forward at speed and explode. Note: Stay on your toes throughout the move.

**Best Game Situation For The Use Of This Move**
- Moving in straight line with a chasing or pressurizing defender to the side.
- Can be effective to create space when moving in any direction.

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**Fake Pass and Inside Step Over or Rivelino**

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**

Stand on your toes with feet shoulder width apart and both feet directly to one side of the ball. The knees should be bent at about 100-140 degrees.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**

Rapidly bring the furthest foot across the front of the nearest foot to the ball as if to pass with the inside of the foot. The heel of the “step over” foot should just miss the ball in front while the sole of the foot should cut the grass across the front of the ball. The toes of the step over foot should
land briefly on the opposite side of the ball from the starting position so that the foot is poised 3 inches away from and slightly behind the ball on the opposite side of the ball from the desired play away direction. Transfer your weight to the toes of that foot for a split second while moving the other foot into the best base position for a sprint after the play away.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.**
A fraction of a second after moving the first foot across the front of the ball, cut the grass behind the ball with the other foot until that foot is approximately 12-15 inches on the opposite side of the ball and on the opposite side of the ball from the desired play away direction. The knee of the non play-away foot should now be bent at approximately 90 degrees.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**
The ball should be played away with the outside of the foot that is now 3 inches from the ball at a “forwards” forty-five degree angle from the way the player was facing at the start of the move. Explode for 5 yards to finish. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

**Best Game Situation For The Use Of This Move**
- Moving diagonally across field at a slower pace with some separation from a recovering defender.

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**Fake Pass and Swivel Step Over**

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**
Stand on your toes with both feet to one side of the ball in a shielding position with the defender on one side of your body and the ball on the outside of the furthest foot away from the defender. Lift the arm nearest the defender and bend it at the elbow so that the outside of the forearm makes slight contact with the defender. Prior to beginning the move lean towards the defender and away from the ball.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**
Upon beginning the move shift your body weight and take the nearest foot to the defender rapidly towards the ball as if to pass backwards. Miss the ball by a fraction and cut the grass across the front of the ball with the sole of furthest foot to the ball until that foot is 3 inches away from and on the opposite side of the ball from the intended direction of play away which is a forty five degree angle past the defender.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move.**
As you do this cut the grass with the other foot across the back of the ball until that foot is 12-15 inches on the opposite side and away from the ball, from the intended direction of play away. The knee of the non play-away foot should now be bent at approximately 90 degrees. The action is very similar to that of the Rivelino but prior to the play away the feet are placed more to the front far side of the ball to allow the correct backward angle for the play away.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**
As the ball is played away, the closest hip to the defender should now swivel backward and the ball should pass quickly across face of the defender. The ball should be played with the outside of the foot. Explode for 5 yards to finish. Stay on your toes during move.

**Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move**
- From the static shield position with side to defender.
- Moving with back to defender across or slightly down the field
Fake Pass and Cruyff Turn
1. Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).
Stand one to two yards behind the ball. Step towards the ball and place the toes of the standing foot 1-2 feet nearer to you than the ball and 6-9 inches to its side. This 1-2 foot separation helps you to lean backwards towards the intended direction of the play away and accelerate quickly out of the move with the ball. As you are placing the standing foot, withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up to strike it.
2. Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.
Rapidly bring the foot forward as if to pass. At the last split second hook the non standing foot around the far side of ball until the knee of the non standing leg is turned inwards towards the knee of the standing leg, i.e. the knock kneed position. Wrap the toe of the play away foot completely around the ball until the ball fits snugly into the concave indentation on the inside of the foot. Make sure that the toe and heel of the play away foot stay at the same height.
3. Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move
Pull the ball rapidly behind and alongside the standing foot with an upward “Donkey Kicking” motion, i.e. from a slightly to completely bent leg position. As you perform the “donkey kick” make sure that the toe and heel of the play away foot stay at the same height throughout the action.
4. Final explosive finish to the move.
Lean backward, at an extreme angle during this move. Continue to turn to your left if making ball contact with the right foot or continue to turn to the right if making ball contact with the left foot. Explode for 5 yards to finish. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
- Reversing play when moving square across the field.
- Reversing direction in the attacking third when trying to beat a man to penetrate.

Fake Pass and Spin Cruyff
1. Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).
Stand on your toes one to two yards behind the ball. Step towards the ball and place the standing foot about 6-9 inches nearer to you than the ball and 1-2 feet to the right of the ball if using your left foot to stand on and 1-2 feet to the left of the ball if using your right foot to stand on during the move. As you are placing the standing foot, swivel towards the ball at a 90 degree angle from your approach. If the standing foot is your left it will be 90 degrees to your left and vice versa with the right foot.
2. Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.
As you are placing the standing foot, withdraw the thigh of the other leg back away from the ball as if winding up to strike it and rapidly bring the foot forward as if to pass. At the last split second hook the non standing foot around the far side of ball until the knee of the non standing leg is turned inwards towards the knee of the standing leg, i.e. the knock kneed position. Wrap the toe of the play away foot completely around the ball until the ball fits snugly into the concave indentation on the inside of the foot. Make sure that the toe and heel of the play away foot stay at the same height.
3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move**

Pull the ball behind and alongside the standing foot with an upward “Donkey Kicking” motion, i.e. from a slightly to completely bent leg position. As you perform the “donkey kick” make sure that the toe and heel of the play away foot are at the same height.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**

Lean backward, at an extreme angle during this move. Continue to turn to your left if making ball contact with the right foot or continue to turn to the right if making ball contact with the left foot. Explode for 5 yards to finish. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

### Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
- Moving across field from a shield position

#### Scissors or Outside Step Over

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**

Stand on your toes with feet shoulder width apart and both feet directly to one side of the ball. The knees should be bent at about 100-140 degrees.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**

Cut the grass across the front of the ball with the sole of foot originally nearest to the ball until that foot is 12-24 inches on the other side of the ball from where it was first positioned.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move**

A fraction of a second after this cut the grass immediately behind the ball with the foot that was originally furthest away from the ball so that it is poised in the air 3-6 inches away from and slightly behind the ball on the opposite side of the ball from the intended direction of the play away. Please note; during the step over phase of the move, the knees of both legs should never be anymore than 18 inches apart. To enhance deception, turn your chest and drop your shoulder towards the direction of the fake at the end of the initial step over. The knee of the non play-away foot should now be bent at approximately 90 degrees.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**

Play the ball away from the fake with the outside of the foot that moved across the back of the ball. The ball should be played away at approximately forty-five degrees from the way the player is facing. Explode to finish. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

### Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
- Attacking a defender head on.

#### Touch and Hop or Matthews

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**

This is a great fake because it has four distinct deceptive elements; the lean, the bait touch, the quick sideways hop and the chest and shoulder fake. Initially, stand with the ball between your toes with your feet about six inches to either side. First lean sideways towards the direction of the fake. The knees should be bent at about 100-140 degrees.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**

Give the ball a 6 inch “little touch” gently but decisively sideways towards the direction of the fake with the inside of one foot.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move**
Almost simultaneously perform a “big low sideways hop” with the other foot in the same direction and land on your toes 18-24 inches away from the ball on the opposite side from the intended direction of the play away. At the end of the fake turn your chest a little away from the intended exit path and drop your shoulder towards the direction of the fake to enhance deception.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move.**
Finish by playing the ball away at a forty-five degree angle past the opponent in the opposite direction from the fake with the outside of the ball playing foot. Explode for 5 yards to complete the move. Stay on toes during whole sequence.

**Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move**
- Attacking a defender head on.

**Touch and Hop/Outside Step Over or Matthews/Scissors**

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**
This is a great fake because it has many distinct deceptive elements; the lean, the bait touch, the quick sideways hop of the Matthews plus the scissor action and upper body fake of the outside step over. Initially, stand with the ball between your toes with your feet about six inches to either side. Lean sideways towards the direction of the first fake. The knees should be bent at about 100-140 degrees.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**
Give the ball a “little six inch touch” with the inside of one foot, gently but decisively sideways towards the direction of the first fake. Almost simultaneously perform a “big low sideways hop” with the other foot in the same direction and land on your toes 18-24 inches away from the ball, on the opposite side from your original position.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move**
Fake to go back in the other direction. To do this cut the grass across the front of the ball with the sole of foot now nearest to the ball until that foot is 12-24 inches on the other side of the ball from where it was just positioned. As you are doing this cut the grass immediately behind the ball with the foot that was furthest away from the ball after the Matthews. Move this foot across the back of the ball so that it is poised in the air 3-6 inches away from and slightly behind the ball on the opposite side of the ball from the intended direction of the play away.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move**
Now play the ball away from the second fake with the outside of the foot that moved across the back of the ball. To enhance deception, turn your chest and drop your shoulder towards the direction of the fake at the end of the second part of the move i.e. scissors. To finish, the ball should be played away at approximately forty-five degrees from the way the player is facing. Explode at full speed to finish. Stay on your toes throughout the move.

**Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move**
- Attacking a defender head on.
Swivel/Swivel or Adapted “Beardsley”

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**
   While moving sideways and shielding the opponent from the ball let the ball roll slightly in front of the bodyline. While shielding, lean away from the ball and toward the opponent. Position your forearm against the opponent’s upper body to act as a barrier.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move.**
   Quickly reverse the direction of the shield by swiveling your hips and turning your body in the opposite direction. While doing so use the foot that was originally nearest your opponent to reach around to the far side of the ball and cut it back 6 inches along the line it was originally traveling. When performing the cut back, lean sideways away from the ball with your forearm at your opponent’s chest height to establish a new strong shielding position. The “reach around” or “cut” foot contact should be made with a backward cutting or slightly downward chopping motion around the far side of the ball with the inside of the big toe joint area of the foot. While performing the cutting action the toe and the heel must be kept on the same level. It is important to swivel your hips and adopt a “knock-knee position to get the inside of the foot around the far side of the ball. It is also important to be leaning backwards and sideways towards the direction you came from to enhance the fake and make the defender turn back with you.

3. **Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move**
   After the initial cut back of about 6 inches, keep the cutting foot off the ground and quickly swivel it back to your side of the ball in a very similar position to that of the original shield (described in stage 1 above). If your original cut is with the inside of the right foot the right foot should be swiveled to a point 6—9 inches to the left and near side of the ball at the point of the play away. If the original cut was with the inside of the left foot the left foot should be swiveled to a point 6—9 inches to the right and near side of the ball. Note; at this point the foot is positioned in the opposite direction from when it was cutting the ball back.

4. **Final explosive finish to the move**
   While doing this you should swivel your hips in the opposite direction and cut the ball back with the inside of the big toe joint area of the opposite foot at a 45 degree backward angle to the original line of the ball. Explode 5 yards to finish.

**Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move**
- Best used moving square across the field with a shield position on the defender

**Tap and Play Behind The Standing Leg**

1. **Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).**
   Stand on your toes with both feet to one side of the ball in a shielding position with the defender on one side of your body and the ball on the furthest side away from the defender. Put all your weight on the nearest foot to the defender. Place feet about shoulder width apart and lean away from ball. Lift nearest arm to defender and furthest from ball until it is parallel to floor, to shield the opponent from the ball.

2. **Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move**
   Skip standing foot away from the imaginary opponent towards the ball and as you do so tap the ball with the inside of the skipping foot about 6-9 inches further away from the opponent. Ensure that the ball is tapped 25-30 degrees backward. Immediately after tapping the ball 6-9 inches
away from opponent ground contact foot. After grounding contact foot, hook the other foot around far side of ball until the knee of the non-standing leg is turned inwards towards the knee of the standing leg i.e. knock knee position.

3. Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move
Wrap the toe of the play away foot around ball until it fits snugly into the concave indentation on inside of foot and pull ball behind you and alongside the standing foot, with an upward “Donkey Kicking” motion, i.e. from slightly bent to completely bent leg position. As you perform the “donkey kick” make sure that the toe and heel of play away foot are at same height.

4. Final explosive finish to the move
Continue to turn to left if making the play away ball contact with the right foot and continue to turn to right if making play away contact with the left foot. Explode for 5 yards to finish. Stay on your toes during move.

Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
- From a static shield position with side to defender

Reverse Matthews, Ronaldinho

1. Initial set-up foot and body position (stance).
Face the defender while dribbling the ball with the outside of the foot.

2. Feet & body positioning during the initial dynamic ball contact part of move
Slide the ball outwards at a 45 degree angle from the center line of the dribble with the outside of one foot.

3. Feet & body positioning during the final dynamic ball contact part of move
Quickly slide the same foot underneath and around the ball to the outside and chop the ball back 90 degrees from the previous line of travel to the other side of the centerline of the direction of the dribble. The chop must be powerful enough that the ball travels at least 5 yards without the necessity of another touch.

4. Final explosive finish to the move
As you are chopping the ball, perform a head fake in the opposite direction to the final play away before exploding after the ball.

Best Game Situations For The Use Of This Move
Attacking a defender head on.
Chapter Seventy-Six

The Legends Way to Teach Shooting

For both players and spectators alike a dynamic shot is the most entertaining and exhilarating skill of soccer. Consistent goal scorers are those players who possess the courage, instinct and self-confidence to accept the responsibility to occupy the shooting zone and attempt the shot as frequently as possible. They also tend to remain calm and calculating in the split second available before shooting at goal. As with everything in life, shooting aptitudes are partially inherent but can be influenced to a great degree by quality coaching. Other physiological factors such as the ability to perform a variety of shooting techniques, turning to shoot at speed and rapid technical performance in finishing situations, are almost totally reliant on learning through practice and, therefore, can be maximally influenced by the coaching and training process.

It has always surprised the author that so little finishing practice is specific to the type of position the shooter is likely to find himself in and to the type of ball he will have to strike. In support of this statisticians have discovered that, “over 50 per cent of opportunities to shoot are from dropping or bouncing balls while greater than 90 per cent of shooting practices are with rolling balls”, (Trimby R, 1977, p.25). Therefore, it follows that for shooting practices to be truly meaningful they must be related to the game itself as soon as developmental maturity allows. The coach of young players must structure the introduction of opposition carefully to develop confidence and maximize development. Therefore, he must be sensitive to the needs of the individual whilst attempting to transition into the realistic game related situation as quickly as possible.

Breaking Down And Teaching The Technical Stages Of Shooting

Warm up for younger players – “Bombardment” – Please note: Players should not be allowed to shoot with power in this warm up stage. The emphasis here should be accuracy and technical variety because the goal is to have fun and get the shooting muscle temperature elevated without risking injury by over stressing a cold muscle. Shooting for accuracy without power, e.g. by bending, chipping, lob volleying or simply placing the ball instead of powering it, will warm the muscle up nicely without risking injury. The best warm ups are specific to the planned activity but smaller and less stressful versions of that activity. In “Bombardment” two teams of players shoot on the opponent’s goal (spaced 20 yards apart). Shots must be taken from the furthest half of the field (at least ten yards away from goal). Each player keeps track of his or her goal total and at the end of a pre-determined time the individual scores of players are publicly announced to find out how each individual performed in the “Bombardment” competition. Individual scoring leaders are identified at this point but players with lower totals are not singled out. The good coach will always highlight some aspect of the young player’s action to temper the negatives of a less successful statistical performance.
Warm up for older players - During and post growth spurt, warm ups should involve fast footwork, strength and plyometric exercises.

Static Technique – This stage works on the technical practice requirements of the shot, (see coaching points for each shooting technique), with limited balanced & rhythmic movement but no opposition. It is during this stage that the foundation of technical perfection is established. It cannot be emphasized enough how much attention needs to be paid to each part of the shooting action to make sure that all players are technically correct in their actions. Descriptions of the appropriate technique are often ineffective because of the interpretation of language i.e. “what you thought I said is not what I meant”. Because of this the coach should use regular visual feedback, i.e. demonstrations, and where necessary, actually move the player’s limbs through the required motion, (tactile stimulation), to give the player the internal sensation of how it feels to perform the action correctly.

An example of this would be the explanation and slow repetition of a power shot technique by the coach, with frequent demonstration of good form highlighting the areas of greatest difficulty. In addition to the coach identifying individual areas of difficulty he will move the body part correctly through the appropriate range of motion until the basic movement pattern can be performed in the right way and is ready to be subjected to the pressures of greater speed. When demonstrating shooting the coach should demonstrate the technique from a variety of angles. Arguably the most effective angle is with his back to the player because this allows the player to copy without having to “mirror image” the action. Even 3 year olds can play “follow the leader” and learn a difficult skill if the coach demonstrates skills while facing away from the pupil.

Dynamic Technique - Technical practice requirements of the given skill, with dynamic and powerful movement - still no opposition.

Here the players are asked to improve their shooting technique at speed while retaining technical efficiency. In this stage the coach needs to watch players closely and correct technical faults that creep into performance as a result of trying to do things faster. Some repeat of the action in a slower yet technically correct manner is often necessary before making the full transition to powerful movement at high speed.

Pressure Training – This involves technical practice of the given skill under the pressures of urgency, speed and fatigue. This type of training lessens the “when fatigue steps in skill steps out” factor. Shooting under the pressure of fatigue is best practiced in the small field environment where there is at least one ball for each player. Here the player is expected to retrieve a ball quickly and shoot within two touches of possessing the ball. This demands a first time shot or a quick set up and shot. To increase the fatigue factor the players must race to loose balls and shoot again as quickly as possible. Keeping score creates the urgency to retrieve balls in order to maximize the number of shots taken and the total of goals scored.

One way to improve performance at speed with intensity of effort and growing fatigue is to run a countdown alarm wristwatch and see how many goals each player can make in a limited time. For younger players with limited endurance two minutes per round will be enough. The initial shots will be crisp but as the clock winds down it will take a greater mental effort to retain
technical efficiency due to the onset of fatigue. At the end of the round the individual with the most goals wins.

**Skill Stage** - Introduction of active opposition - initially low pressure but developing to a full and active defense.

Shooting under the pressure of opposition is best practiced in the 1 v 1 environment. Here the player is expected to shoot within one, two, three or four touches of possessing the ball depending on level of age and development. This demands a first time shot, a quick set up and shot or a quick set up, fake and shot. To increase the intensity/competition factor the possession goes to whoever wins the race to the loose ball. When player development is embryonic defenders can be made to hop on one or both legs, thereby offering only token pressure while the shot is taken. Once the shot has been struck, the ball becomes live and whoever wins the race to the loose ball makes the other player hop until the next shot is taken.

**Stage 3, 4, 5 or 6 - Fun Game (Ages 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9)** - With younger players split your session up with a skill related fun game. This stage is the only one that does not have to follow the numerical sequence. It should be inserted into the practice at approximately the halfway point to give the players a mental break, and to get them in the right frame of mind for the hard work in the second half of the practice. The fun game should be selected to enhance the skill worked on. This is especially valuable when coaching younger players because their attention span is shorter and they need more pure play activities in their sessions in order to stay motivated. There are a myriad of fun games that can be conditioned to include shooting. These include Wembley, Foxes and Rabbits, Knockout, Bombardment and others too numerous to mention. The purpose of this book is to stress the keys to the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy so I won’t describe the myriad of games available. Many books have been written on fun games and drills. These books include numerous shooting options, however, my favorite is “Bombardment” as described in the warm up stage above. This is a great drill because every player is involved in taking shots at all times and yet there is still a competitive result and consequence.

**Conditioned Game** - Small-sided games, (either 1 v 1 or 2 v 2), with specific restrictions, i.e. the player is expected to shoot within one, two, three or four touches of possessing the ball. This demands a first time shot, a quick set up and shot or a quick set up, fake and shot. The conditioned game is a cornerstone of the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy because this is where the players learn to use their skill at speed under game conditions, while also doing the tactical things that need to become automatic in matches.

**Cool down and stretch.** - This stage is strictly for older players. It is usually most effective post growth spurt. The cool down involves light jogging, (with a ball if possible), to help remove the by products of intense exercise from the working muscle, followed by stretching to squeeze more of those by products from the muscle and encourage maximum muscle recovery in minimum time.
Chapter Seventy-Seven

Shooting – Coaching Points

- Adopt the correct attitude. Be brave and courageous.
- Be selfish. Take every reasonable opportunity to shoot.
- Utilize the correct technique.
- Low shots are more difficult to save than those in the air.
- Shots along the ground can stick, bump or skid causing problems for the goalkeeper.
- Shots away from the goalkeeper to the far post are more difficult to save and create more secondary scoring opportunities.
- Gauge the goalkeeper’s position and aim at the least protected area of the goal.
- Always strike through middle or top half of the ball unless chipping keeper or volleying.
- Utilize maximum possible power while retaining accuracy.
- Keep eyes on the ball after deciding the direction of the shot.
- Pick the area on the ball where contact is desired and concentrate on that point.
- Use your arms for balance.
- Lock the ankle of the kicking foot.
- Disguise the shot if possible.

Shooting - Specific Coaching Points
For Each Shooting Technique

Shooting With The Laces – “The Low Drive or Power Shot”
This method of shooting can be used from close in but is more necessary when shooting from distance for power and accuracy.
- The ball should skim along the surface of the ground.
- Take a long step into the shooting position.
- Place non-kicking foot alongside the ball pointing in the exact intended direction of shot.
- In back swing withdraw the upper leg maximally and bend the knee as fully as possible.
- First bring the thigh downwards and forwards then snap the lower leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
- Lean forward and keep both the kicking knee and body weight over the ball at the point of contact. Do not lean away from the ball.
- Connect at the mid-point between the base of the toes and the start of the ankle joint.
- Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
- Throughout the action point the toes down and approximately 20-25 degrees out to avoid kicking the ground with your toe.
Strike the ball exactly at the vertical and horizontal mid-point.
Swing the shooting leg on the intended flight line of the ball.
Follow through after contact and land on the shooting foot.
The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the intended flight path of the ball.
The shooting foot should land three or more feet in advance of where the first contact with the ball was made.

**Shooting With The Outside Of The Foot – “The Flick Shot”**
This method of striking the ball is used for quick deceptive finishing from within 18 yards of goal.

- Put non-kicking foot alongside and away from ball so there’s room to swing striking foot.
- The back swing involves withdrawing the thigh on an outside in path so that at the start of the down swing the shooting leg is slightly across the back of the support leg.
- The down swing occurs on an inside out path.
- First bring the thigh downwards and forwards then snap the leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
- Lean forward and keep both the kicking knee and body weight over the ball at the point of contact. Do not lean away from the ball.
- Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
- All through the action point the toes down and approximately 20-25 degrees inwards.
- Connect on the outside of the foot at the mid-point between the base of the little toe and the start of the ankle joint.
- Strike the ball exactly at the vertical and horizontal mid-point.
- Swing the shooting leg on the intended flight line of the ball.
- Follow through after contact and land on the shooting foot.
- The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the intended flight path of the ball.
- The shooting foot should land approximately two feet in advance of where the first contact with the ball was made.

**Shooting With The Inside Of The Foot – “The Push Shot”**
This method of striking the ball is used for maximum accuracy when finishing from within 18 yards of goal.

- The ball should skim along the surface of the ground.
- Only use this shot over short to medium distances because it is difficult to generate power and to disguise intentions.
- The non-shooting foot is positioned to side and 6-8 inches away from the ball.
- The non-shooting foot must be pointing towards the intended target point of the shot.
- In the back swing open the hip and turn the knee and foot at a ninety-degree angle to that of the standing foot.
- Withdraw the upper part of shooting leg maximally. Bend both knees to an approximately one hundred and thirty degree angle and “sit” slightly at the point of contact.
In the down swing bring the thigh forwards keeping the knee and ankle locked through impact with the ball.

Lean forward and keep both the hip and body weight over the ball at the point of contact. Do not lean away from the ball. “Kiss your knee” for as long as possible during the technique is a useful coaching point.

Connect at the mid-point between the base of the big toe and the medial condyle, i.e. bony knob, of the ankle joint.

Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.

All through action point toes outwards and keep sole of your foot parallel with ground.

Strike the ball exactly at the vertical and horizontal mid-point.

Swing the shooting leg on the intended flight line of the ball.

Follow through after contact and land on the shooting foot.

The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the intended flight path of the ball.

The shooting foot should land approximately two feet in advance of where the contact with the ball was made.

**Bending The Ball With Outside Of Foot – “The Banana Shot”**

This method of striking the ball is used for swerving the ball around defenders or for deceiving the goalkeeper.

- Place the non-kicking foot slightly behind and to the side of the ball about 6-8 inches away from it.
- Take a long step into the shooting position.
- The body should be slightly behind the ball at impact.
- The back swing involves withdrawing the thigh on an inside out path so that at the start of the down swing the shooting leg is behind and away from the support leg.
- The down swing occurs on an outside in path.
- First bring the thigh downwards and forwards then snap the leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
- Lean forward and keep both the kicking knee and body weight over the ball at the point of contact. Do not lean away from the ball.
- Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
- All through the action point the toes down and approximately 20-25 degrees inwards to avoid kicking the ground with your toe.
- Connect on the outside of the foot at the mid-point between the base of the little toe and the start of the ankle joint.
- Strike the ball on a slight upward flight path on a line beginning from a point to the lower outside of the near side horizontal/vertical mid point and extending through the ball to a point on the upper inside of the far horizontal/vertical mid point. This motion of striking “across” the line of the ball imparts spin that causes the ball to bend in flight.
Swing the shooting leg on the initial intended flight line of the ball. This will be towards a point to the left or right of the target depending on which foot used. The ball will begin its flight path on the line of the leg swing but bend towards the intended target.

Follow through on the initial intended flight line of the ball after contact and land on the shooting foot.

The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the initial flight path of the ball.

The shooting foot should land approximately three feet in advance of where the first contact with the ball was made.

**Bending Ball With Inside Of The Foot – “The Banana Shot”**

This method of striking the ball is used for swerving the ball around defenders or for deceiving the goalkeeper.

- Place the non-kicking foot slightly behind and to the side of the ball about 6-8 inches away from it.
- Take a long step into the shooting position.
- The body should be slightly behind the ball at impact.
- The back swing involves withdrawing the thigh on an outside in path so that at the start of the down swing the shooting leg is behind the support leg.
- The down swing occurs on an inside out path.
- First bring the thigh downwards and forwards then snap the leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
- Lean slightly backward and away from the ball keeping both the body weight slightly behind and to the inside of the ball at the point of contact.
- Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
- All through the action point the toes at a forty-five degree angle forwards and outwards with the sole of the foot parallel to the ground.
- Connect at the mid-point between the base of the big toe and the medial condyle, i.e. inside bony knob, of the ankle joint.
- Strike the ball at a forty-five degree angle to the direct line between the ball and the goal on a slight upward flight path. The line of the striking foot through the ball begins at a point to the lower outside of the near side of the ball's horizontal/vertical mid point and extends through the ball to a point on the upper outside of the far horizontal/vertical mid point. This motion of striking diagonally “across” the direct line between the ball and the goal imparts spin that causes the ball to bend in flight.
- Swing the shooting leg on the initial intended flight line of the ball. This will be towards a point to the left or right of the ball's target depending on which foot used. The ball will begin its flight path on the line of the leg swing but bend towards the intended target as the spin imparted by the slicing motion takes effect.
- Follow through in a curving motion as the leg rotates around the body and land on the shooting foot two feet in front of the point of impact.
Shooting With The Upper Toe – “The Chip Shot”

This method is very effective in beating a goalkeeper who has advanced off his line leaving extra space behind for a well placed chip.

- The approach is either straight or slightly curved.
- The non-kicking foot should be placed alongside the ball 4-6 inches away.
- Connect with upper toes or extreme base of the instep.
- Both feet should be pointed in the intended direction of the shot.
- In the back swing withdraw the upper leg and bend the knee.
- First bring the thigh downwards and forwards sharply then snap the lower leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
- Lean slightly backward and keep both the kicking knee and body weight slightly behind the ball at the point of contact.
- Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
- All through action point toes forwards and keep sole of the foot parallel with the ground.
- Strike the ball well below the vertical and horizontal mid-point where the foot and the ball meet the ground.
- The contact with the ball is a stabbing motion with little or no follow through.

Shooting With The Inside Of The Foot – “The Volley”

This method is used for striking a dropping ball from closer to goal when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn’t allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

- The non-shooting foot is positioned to the side and below the point of impact at a forty-five degree angle from the point of impact, 6-8 inches away from the ball.
- The non-kicking foot should point to the exact intended direction of the shot.
- A ninety-degree bend of the kicking leg is ideal. The standing leg should be slightly bent.
- Contact the ball slightly above its mid-point while still in the air to direct it downwards to the goal line. Connect at the mid-point between the joint end of the big toe and two inches from the heel end of the foot.
- The kicking foot should point outwards at 90 degrees to exact intended direction of shot.
- While pointing the foot at a right angle to the intended line of flight, withdraw the thigh as far back as the hip will allow and punch the foot through the impact with the ball.
- Throughout the shooting action lean forward to the ball side. “Kiss your knee” for as long as possible during the technique is a useful coaching point.
- Follow through after contact and land on the shooting foot. This should still be at 90 degrees to the ball’s intended line of flights.
- The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the intended flight path of the ball.
- The shooting foot should land at least two feet in advance of where the first contact with the ball was made.
Shooting With The Laces Of The Foot – “The Volley”
This method is used for striking a dropping ball further away from goal when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn’t allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

- The non-kicking foot should be alongside and below the ball in contact with the ground.
- Place non-kicking foot alongside the ball pointing in exact intended direction of the shot.
- In the back swing withdraw upper leg maximally and bend the knee as fully as possible.
- First bring the thigh downwards and forwards then snap the lower leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
- Lean forward and keep both the kicking knee and body weight over the ball at the point of contact, (Do not lean away from the ball). “Kiss your knee” for as long as possible during the technique is a useful coaching point.
- Connect at the mid-point between the base of the toes and the start of the ankle joint.
- Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
- All through the action point the toes downwards.
- Strike the ball exactly at the vertical and horizontal mid-point.
- Swing the shooting leg on the intended flight line of the ball.
- Follow through after contact and land on the shooting foot.
- The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the intended flight path of the ball.
- The shooting foot should land at least two feet in advance of where the first contact with the ball was made.

Shooting With The Laces Of The Foot (Instep) – “The Side Volley”
This method is used for striking a dropping ball coming from a cross when lack of time and high defensive pressure doesn’t allow for an extra touch to bring the ball down prior to shooting.

- Set up with the non-shooting foot side nearest to the goal you are shooting at.
- Lean the upper body away from the direction the ball is coming from to help get the shooting foot high at the point of impact.
- Place all body weight on the non-shooting leg with the foot pointed in the direction from which the ball is coming.
- At the beginning of the shooting action lift the knee of the shooting leg quickly until it is parallel with the hip. This should be done while swiveling the hips and the upper body simultaneously to face the target.
- The upper thigh follows the rotation of the hips and in the split second before impact the lower leg is snapped forward from a bent to a straight leg position and the foot makes contact with the ball.
- Contact with the foot should be at the mid-point between the base of the toes and the start of the ankle joint.
- The ankle should be fully extended and locked at the point of contact.
- Contact with the ball should be made slightly above the vertical and horizontal mid-point so that the ball travels downwards towards the goal line.
• The point of contact should be in line with the non-shooting leg and the direction from which the ball is arriving so that the shooting foot is just beginning its downward travel.
• The shooting foot travels in an upward arc from the ground to the point of contact and back down to the ground again. The whole action rotates around the non-shooting leg.
• The point at which the shooting foot begins this action is on the far side of the body away from the target area, i.e. goal.
• The point at which the shooting foot completes the action is where it becomes the standing foot two feet closer to the target area than the point of contact with the ball.

**Shooting With The Laces Of The Foot – “The Half Volley”**

This method is used for striking a ball when time and space allows for the ball to drop to the floor but defensive pressure doesn’t allow for an extra touch to set the ball up prior to shooting.

• Place the non-kicking foot alongside ball pointing in the intended direction of the shot.
• In the back swing withdraw the upper leg maximally and bend knee as fully as possible.
• First bring the thigh downwards and forwards then snap the lower leg straight at the last split second before impact with the ball.
• Lean forward and keep both the kicking knee and body weight over the ball at the point of contact, (Do not lean away from the ball). “Kiss your knee” for as long as possible during the technique is a useful coaching point.
• Time the point of contact for the immediate split second after the ball has bounced.
• Connect at the mid-point between the base of the toes and the start of the ankle joint.
• Keep the head down and steady with eyes always focusing intently on the point of contact with the ball.
• All through the action point the toes downwards.
• Strike the ball exactly at the vertical and horizontal mid-point.
• Swing the shooting leg on the intended flight line of the ball.
• Follow through after contact and land on the shooting foot.
• The shooting foot at landing should be precisely on the intended flight path of the ball.
• The shooting foot should land two feet nearer to the goal than the point of contact with the ball.
Chapter Seventy-Eight

1 v 1 Conditions Guarantee Right Responses At Speed

While reading this book you will have noticed that the “Training Soccer Legends” approach is one that builds sequentially on each preceding stage in a way that introduces new technical and tactical challenges gradually as the prior requirements have been acquired to a reasonable degree of proficiency. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach is a comprehensive long-term plan that covers all the key areas of the game with the addition of a unique creative component that enables a greater percentage of graduates to play at a higher level. In traditional coaching philosophies the coach and players often move randomly from one unrelated area to another. This jumping around from one unrelated topic to another is based on perceptions and conclusions derived from the previous game, not on any logical, long-term developmental plan. Consequently few traditionally coached players are taught all the essential skills and tactics of soccer, and none are taught all the key creative facets of the game. In most club programs there are serious omissions. Because of the absence of comprehensive long-term planning key skills and tactical topics aren’t covered and players from most programs have glaring deficiencies in their game. To use an educational analogy, some programs fail to either plan or institute an agenda that covers all the necessary subject matter. They teach English but forget to cover Math. As a negative consequence their players fail to learn all the skills and tactics necessary to compete at the highest level. This failure is further compounded because of the lack of a developmentally appropriate sequential progression in the curriculum. The “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum is designed to optimize the creativity, number and difficulty of new challenges every step of the way. In the Legends method the coach introduces new skills, tactics and conditions at the appropriate time. This challenges the players to a greater degree than in the previous stage. It is done without eliminating any of the previous stages or conditions. This “add on” method of new topic introduction utilizes proven educational philosophy where foundations are laid and every subsequent phase involves, and relies upon, the previous phases in the development of a better prepared student. The introduction of new conditions occurs as soon as the players have enjoyed reasonable success with the previous challenge. In this way the players constantly use all the skills and tactics they have been taught previously, and yet are perpetually being asked to add in another skill or tactic that will elevate their creative game to an even higher level.

“Above all, we are coming to understand that the arts incarnate the creativity of a free people. When the creative impulse cannot flourish, when it cannot freely select its methods and objects, when it is deprived of spontaneity, then society severs the root of art.
John Fitzgerald Kennedy”

Please note: Including a more difficult skill, tactic or condition in the progression too soon may be detrimental to the successful mastery of a previously introduced skill or tactic.
All 1 v 1 games are “Make It - Take It”. Thus when a player scores that player retains possession and attacks the other goal. As a consequence of the “Make It – Take It” condition there is no reward for poor defending.

The following is a partial list of 1 v 1 conditions intended to maximize the development of the technically and tactically intuitive dribbler and finisher:

- Player must do a fake on every possession before shooting. The failure to do a fake results in the loss of the score if the ball went in, or possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions players to play with creative deception in front of goal.

- Shot must be struck with power. Failure to strike the ball with power results in the loss of the score if the ball went in, or possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the ability to strike the ball quickly, with power, under pressure.

- Shot must hit the side netting inside the goal in order to count. Failure to hit the inside side netting results in the loss of the score if the ball went in, or possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the ability to score just inside the far post on the floor where the target is larger and maximizes the chances for a rebound because deflection opportunities are more common on far post shots.

- Dribbling player must explode for 5 yards after each fake. Even if the ball entered the goal on the subsequent shot or possession, failure to explode results in a loss of the score. If the ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot, possession is lost due to the failure of the ball carrier to explode. This conditions the explosive play away that is essential when attempting to completely dominate an opponent.

- The shot must be struck on the next touch after the play away from the fake. Failure to strike ball immediately following the play away from the fake results the in loss of the score if the ball went in, or possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the ability to strike a ball quickly, with power, under pressure, on the very first touch after the play away, before the defender can recover to apply new defensive pressure to the ball.

- The first fake in each possession must be started on the second touch at the latest. The player at the highest level will only get one clean up touch before having to use deception while dribbling. Failure to start a fake on second touch results in loss of possession. This conditions the ability to plan an action before receiving the ball and play the first touch in a way that sets up the second touch.

- Each player in every round will be limited to using three, two or one designated fakes. As players get better reduce the number of options. In each round the designated fakes must be performed on each possession prior to scoring. Failure to perform a designated fake, or fakes, results in a loss of possession. This ensures that all recommended “Training Soccer Legends” fakes are learned and used under pressure.

- All defenders must adopt a quarter turn, jockey, delay and channel position that forces the dribbler towards the weak foot. Failure to set up the correct tactical defense will result in...
a return of possession to the dribbler even if the dribbling player has been dispossessed. This conditions quick and correct defense posture.

- Defending player must track the assigned attacker and stay goal-side after every shot. The defender must beat the attacking player in any race towards the area in front of the goal. Failure to beat an attacking player in a race to the area in front of the goal results in an automatic point for the attacker and the deduction of a point from the defender. This conditions goal-side defensive tracking.

- Shooting player must explode immediately upon shooting to maximize chances of scoring on the rebound. Failure to explode results in the loss of the score if the ball went in, or a loss of possession if the ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the quick follow-up after shooting and maximizes the occurrence of, and ability to score, rebound goals.

- All shots, including rebound shots, count if struck first time with power. First time shots can be struck after balls deflect off opponent, other players, goal posts or cross bar. This conditions first time finishing in loose ball situations.

- Every touch must be part of a fake or a shot. Failure to make every touch a part of a fake or a shot, results in loss of possession. This conditions the total deception, forward thinking and incisive play necessary to reach the higher levels.

It can be appreciated from the myriad of conditions listed above that as another more difficult condition is added practice becomes even more difficult. This is why it is important to allow the players a reasonable amount of mastery of the previous condition before raising the expectation level by imposing another condition.
Chapter Seventy-Nine

2 V 2 Conditions to Groove
Quick Pass and Shoot Habits

The most important part of the conditioned 2 v 2 process is using one’s teammate to improve the chances of penetrating and scoring. The pitfall in team situations is passing just for its own sake without improving the odds of advancing the ball, retaining possession or scoring. All Legends 2 v 2 conditions are designed to develop every player’s ability to penetrate and score personally, or to create a scoring opportunity for a teammate.

The following is a sequential list of 2 v 2 conditions designed to gradually increase the level of challenge, improve the learning factor and, therefore, accelerate development for the players involved:

- Play one touch, two touch, fake and move within two touches. This condition dictates that either a shot or pass must be made on or before the second touch, or the first fake must be started on or before the second touch in each possession. In and around the penalty area at the very highest level of competition players are given very little time and space by defenders. They may not even have time for one “clean up” touch before shooting, passing or beginning a deceptive dribble. They certainly won’t have the time to take two “clean up” touches before having to either shoot, pass or dribble deceptively. Failure to take a shot, make a pass or begin the first fake on the second touch, results in the loss of possession. This conditions the ability to think ahead, develop a viable plan before receiving the ball and play quickly and deceptively in front of goal.

- Every fake must be preceded with a “finger point and shout” as if the ball carrier is intending to pass to a teammate. Failure to “finger point and shout” results in the loss of possession if the ball was retained after the move. The “finger point and shout” enhances the deceptive effect of each fake and causes defenders to sell themselves or take the bait to a greater degree.

- All shots from the floor must be bent, chipped, driven with power etc. This conditions the ability to use a full range of finishing options. Failure to strike ball as specified results in the loss of the score if the ball went in, or possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the ability to strike a ball quickly, in a variety of ways, under pressure.

- Shot must hit the side netting or back corner stanchion inside the goal in order to count. Failure to hit the side netting, (hitting the back netting), results in loss of score if the ball went in. This conditions the ability to hit the low far post shot where the chance of scoring or getting a live rebound is greatest.

- Dribbling player must explode after each fake. Failure to explode results in loss of score if a goal is scored on the subsequent shot, or loss of possession if ball did not score with
accuracy but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the essential explosive play away for completely beating an opponent.

- The shot must be struck on the play away from the fake or first time with power. Any shot counts if struck first time with power. First time shots can be struck off passes from teammates, after balls deflect off opponent, after balls deflect off other players in practice, or off the goalkeeper, goal posts or cross bar. Failure to strike the ball on the play away from a fake or first time with power results in loss of score if ball went in or loss of possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions the ability to score first time shots or strike a ball quickly, with the specified technique, under pressure, on the very first touch after the play away before the defender can recover and apply new pressure.

- Players will be asked to perform one, two or three specific designated fakes in each round. As players get better reduce the number of options. This ensures all fakes that can create a penetrating or goal scoring opportunity are learned and used under pressure. Only the designated fakes can be used and must be performed prior to scoring in each round. Failure to perform the designated fake/s results in loss of possession. This conditions the usage of all moves taught in the Legends curriculum.

- First defender must adopt a weight on the back foot, quarter turn, jockey, delay and channel to the weak foot position. Failure to set up the correct defensive tactical posture on a play will result in a return of possession to the dribbler. This “return of possession” occurs even when the dribbling player has lost possession to a defender who used an incorrect 1 v 1 defensive posture. This conditions intuitive adoption of correct defensive posture.

- Covering defender must adopt a weight on the front foot diagonal defensive position. Failure to set up the correct tactical covering defensive position will result in a return of possession to the attacking team even if the attacking team has been dispossessed. This conditions early and correct covering defensive posture and positioning.

- Defending players must track goal-side after every shot and beat the attacking players in a race back towards the middle of their goal. Failure to beat attacking players in a straight-line race to the middle of own goal results in an automatic score for the attacking team. This conditions automatic defensive goal-side tracking.

- The shooting player and teammate must explode immediately upon shooting to frame the opposition goal and maximize the chance of scoring if there is a rebound. Failure to explode by either player results in loss of score if ball went in, or possession if ball did not go in but possession was retained after the shot. This conditions a quick follow up on every shot and maximizes the chance of rebound goals.

- Play “first touch only” soccer. Here the first touch must be the initial part of a fake, pass or shot. Failure to make the first touch part of a fake, pass or a shot results in loss of possession. This conditions the lightning fast forward thinking and incisive play necessary to reach the higher levels.

- Each possession must include a specified combination play prior to a goal-scoring attempt. Combination play choices that the coach should teach and include in this conditioned progression are:
1. Wall pass
2. Wall pass fake
3. Overlap
4. Overlap fake
5. Double pass
6. Takeover

Failure to complete a combination play prior to an attempt on goal results in a loss of the goal and/or possession. This conditions the forward thinking, speed of communication and combination play set up and execution necessary for success at the higher levels.

- Over the years the coach should foster a gradually greater degree of difficulty by combining mandated types of shots, fakes and combination plays with the other conditions on the list. After a building process involving a number of years this approach will eventually create the most difficult combination of playing conditions imaginable. This conditions the player to learn, repeat and refine all creative options and combinations under pressure at speed. However, because each condition is sequentially layered into the curriculum and well learned before another is added, the players enjoy constant technical and tactical growth without ever feeling out of their depth or overwhelmed.
Chapter Eighty

Teaching Legends Combination Play Fakes

A key area of the Legends curriculum is teaching and incorporating the combination plays and deceptive combination play fakes with deceptive dribbling and accurate finishing.

Much has been written in other very good books about how to teach Wall Passes, Overlaps, Double Passes and Takeovers. The intent of this book is to offer unusual and unique advice and instruction that deals with accepted topics in more depth, i.e. shooting technique, or offers new and unique perspectives on methods of coaching. Excellent combination play drills and coaching points for the Wall Pass, Overlap, Takeover and Double Pass can be obtained from many different sources, therefore I will not describe the mechanics of teaching these traditional tactical approaches to team penetration. However, in the “Training Soccer Legends” method we demand that our players perform a wall pass fake for every wall pass, an overlap fake for every overlap and a takeover fake for every takeover. The deceptive alternative to the basic combination play must be used to a significant degree because defenses expect the straightforward combination play most of the time. Because of this expectation an argument can be made that combination play fakes should be used more often than the traditional wall pass, overlap or takeover. Varying the mode of penetration makes the offense unpredictable and will create uncertainty in the opposing defense. A defense facing a team that uses both combination plays and play fakes will never be sure whether or not the combination play is going to be completed or whether the player who normally passes possession back to his teammate is going to take the ball himself. This increases the element of surprise and uncertainty resulting in a greater level of combination play deception success and efficiency.

How To Perform The Combination Play Fakes

**Wall Pass Fake**
Here, the player who would normally perform the wall function in a wall pass play, fakes to return the ball to the teammate who just passed it to him, but then turns with the ball towards the far side of the defender from the run of his teammate. Usually the defender will be anticipating the return pass to the original ball carrier and will sneak over towards the original ball carrier’s run to possibly intercept the return pass. This gives the “Wall” player an ideal opportunity to turn away from the run of his teammate to the opposite side of the defender and penetrate with the ball on his own.

**Overlap Fake**
Here the player holding the ball at the time of an overlapping run from a teammate turns to face the overlapping teammate then fakes to pass the ball to him before performing a cut, pull back behind the leg, or Cruyff and turns away from his teammate’s run. The defender will usually anticipate the pass to the overlapping teammate and slide across towards the overlapping player
in anticipation of intercepting the pass. This is often the ideal opportunity to keep the ball and exploit the overlapping run from one’s teammate to deceive the defender. The overlapping player should continue the run as he may receive the ball from the dribbler later in the play.

**Take Over Fake**
Here the original ball carrier fakes to leave the ball for the teammate approaching for the takeover but at the last second pulls the ball away from the fake and explodes into space leaving both opposing defenders covering the wrong opponent.

**The Difference Between Traditional Combination Play Coaching Philosophy and the Legends Method**
Traditional coaches will teach one, two or all three of the above combination play methods in such a way as the ball is always passed to, or taken over by, the “off the ball” runner. However, the “Training Soccer Legends” approach teaches players to vary their combination play tactics so that the outcome of the play is never predictable. This leaves the defense in a zone of uncertainty where they can’t predict which player in the combination play will end up with ball and therefore hesitate fatally for a split second before reacting to the eventual outcome. Earlier in the book we talked about mode fixation with regard to passing. The Legends approach to combination plays offers the unpredictable opposite to “mode fixation”, i.e. mode versatility. The Legends style of mode versatility makes every traditional planned passing situation unpredictable because of each player’s ability to vary the combination play in unexpected ways. Unpredictability, improvisation and surprise nearly always favor the offense over the defense. This means that there is a far greater likelihood of ball retention, penetration and goal-scoring opportunity if the players are coached in both the mechanics and nuances of traditional combination play execution and the “Training Soccer Legends” method of combination play deception.
Chapter Eighty-One

The Myth of the Third Man Run

Teaching off the ball 2nd attacker runs is a vital component of the Legends approach. 2 v 2 is an ideal environment for teaching this component because there is nowhere in 2 v 2 for the support player to hide, therefore that player has to make a dynamic run to help the ball carrier on every possession.

Over the last decade and a half many knowledgeable individuals (in the traditional sense) have taken issue with the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy. One of their favorite areas of criticism involves the apparent lack of “third man run” opportunities in a 2 v 2 practice focus.

Upon first examining this issue this criticism seems to have some validity, however, upon in depth analysis the whole area of “third man runs” involves some contradictions that are worth discussing.

The first and obvious contradiction involves whether players off the ball should make “third man runs” or “second man runs”. After many thousands of games and over 30 years of analysis the logical conclusion is that teammates off the ball should be making second not third man runs. This is because the ball carrier needs immediate support from as many teammates as possible and even then getting “open” in advance of the ball is a rare occurrence. For the sake of this discussion we will call any player supporting the ball carrier the “second attacker” and any player supporting the player he believes will receive the ball from the current ball carrier the “third man”. If the mythical third man run was a reality coaches would have to teach their players to reject “second attacker” runs for part of the time, in favor of “third man” runs. This sounds good in theory but in reality the ball carrier, (first attacker), needs all the second attacker help he can get from his teammates in order to have even one good penetrating passing option. Sacrificing “second attacker” support for “third man runs” will inevitably lessen the passing options for the ball carrier. A further problem with the focus on “third man runs” is the human factor. In soccer the ball carrier selects from a myriad of options each time he has the ball. Even a good “second attacker” run often goes unrewarded because the ball carrier does not recognize the option, or is in no position to exercise that option if he does. A “third man run” is even less likely to be rewarded because the completion of the “third man” play is farther in the future, involves a far greater number of uncontrollable variables and includes correct recognition and solid execution by the initial ball carrier. All this followed by a repeat of that recognition and execution by the “second attacker”. There are simply too many things that can go wrong if the attacker’s focus is on making third man runs instead of supporting the ball carrier directly.

For the “third man run” to occur with success, he has to reject a logical “second man” support run with a greater chance of success, in favor of a much less logical “third man” option with a far lower chance of success due to a greater range of uncontrollable variables.
The Brazilians are famous for both their tremendous ability with the ball and their ability to make telling off the ball runs. It has been suggested that they provide the best historical examples of effective “third man runs”. Perhaps the most famous Brazilian “third man run” is that of Carlos Alberto in the final of the 1979 World Cup in Mexico. For those who haven’t seen the goal, the last three Brazilian players to touch the ball were Jairzinho who made a dribble down the left flank, performed a “Matthews” fake, cut inside his defender and passed the ball diagonally forward to Pele. Pele prepared the ball with a perfect first touch and slipped the ball to his right for the overlapping Carlos Alberto who was arriving at full speed in the penalty area. The ball from Pele was so exquisitely delivered that Carlos Alberto was able to drive it low far post without breaking stride. It was a goal that had everything. It involved a great build up, dribbling deception, receiving brilliance, vision, passing perfection and a wonderful finish. However, analysis shows that Carlos Alberto’s run was probably a “second attacker run” from start to finish. He appeared to begin his run from his own defense with the belief that there was a great chance that Jairzinho might be able to pass the ball directly to him. When the ball was passed to Pele he continued his run in the knowledge that there was an even better chance that Pele would get him the ball. To suggest that Carlos Alberto’s prime initial motivation for making the run was as the “third man” for Pele, is to ignore the obvious and disregard the more logical hypothesis that he was supporting Jairzinho until the moment that the ball was passed to Pele, at which time he became the support attacker to Pele. This would make the start of his off the ball run from defense a second attacker run for Jairzinho and later, a second attacker run for Pele.

This hypothesis can also be argued in regard to the 2002 World Cup final goal against Germany. Did Ronaldo make his run into space behind Rivaldo because he thought he could be a target for the direct cross from the wing or was it made because he saw himself as Rivaldo’s “third man runner” prior to the original pass towards Rivaldo? Anyone who watches the clip closely can see that Ronaldo didn’t recognize Rivaldo’s intent to dummy the ball until the previous pass was on its way to Rivaldo making the play a second, instead of a third attacker, option.

After watching thousands of hours of video tape footage with the intent of spotting a third man run I have yet to spot a situation where the attacker is obviously moving in anticipation of the second pass in the sequence before the first pass has been made. Therefore, it is my belief that players realize through a lifetime of experience that there are so many variables that can negatively affect the outcome of a third man run that they wait to see how viable the preceding pass is before making, what is by then, a second attacker run.

As a consequence of extensive experience, research and the obvious logic involved, it appears conclusive that focusing on 2 v 2 and the support play of the second attacker, instead of 3 v 3 with a third man run focus is more beneficial. To train a third man run that ignores the immediate support needs of the ball carrier costs the individual and the team essential second attacker support training. However, good second attacker play has unquestionable benefits and is completely accepted as being essential and crucial to the well being of both the team and ball carrier.
In addition to the above negative of focusing on the mythical existence of third attacker play there is the statistical perspective of playing 2 v 2, as opposed to 3 v 3, small-sided games. In 2 v 2 every player gets 25% ball time and 25% second attacker support time in addition to 25% in each of the crucial first and second defender roles. However, in 3 v 3 the time in the crucial roles of first and second attacker is reduced by a third, thereby limiting experience and capability in both these crucial areas of the game by the same percentage.

**Important Quick Note:** My conclusion is that even at the highest level there is little evidence of the “third man run”. Any player who attempts to predict the position of the ball beyond the immediate pass and moves to a field position of benefit only if that one of many options becomes a reality, is sacrificing second attacker support and leaving the most important teammate without direct assistance when most needed. The outcome of the next pass cannot be predicted with any certainty, therefore any tactical approach that sacrifices immediate ball carrier support for a less likely option, is at best a long shot and in most instances a recipe for loss of possession. Furthermore, a simple exercise in mathematics shows that sacrificing training time in pursuit of the mythical third man run will cost players vital development in the crucial areas of first and second man attacking and defending.
Chapter Eighty-Two

Motivate By Keeping Score

“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”
Benjamin Disraeli

As both the above and following quotes show history has provided us with numerous examples of skewed statistical surveys designed to collect statistics to prove the validity of a position of self-interest.

“I gather, young man, that you wish to be a Member of Parliament. The first lesson that you must learn is, when I call for statistics about the rate of infant mortality, what I want is proof that fewer babies died when I was Prime Minister than when anyone else was Prime Minister. That is a political statistic.”
Sir Winston Churchill

Statistics have had a bad rap because they can be collected and interpreted in many different ways. However, intelligent, unbiased statistical record keeping in soccer can be one of the greatest motivators available to the coach. The power of the pen to record performance creates a history and, therefore, a visible consequence and knowledge of results for the players attempting the skills being assessed.

The coach who uses statistical assessment wisely and collects valid data during practice will reduce time wasting and increase player productivity. There will no longer be a need to spend a portion of valuable coaching time on getting the players to work hard. Time previously spent cajoling or disciplining players can now be used to provide valuable coaching points to enhance technical and tactical development. Therefore, instead of wasting a portion of the practice exhorting players to do their best, the coach can concentrate on improving the mechanics of, or thought force behind, the performance.

The pen is indeed the magic wand. You will find that by breaking your practice into intense competitive segments of 1-6 minutes in duration and then getting a score from each player at the culmination of each round, the simple act of asking for their score and writing it down will motivate your players to work harder and learn more than ever before.

The statistical record keeping system and organizational structure in this book will maximize effective time in practice because it helps you to organize appropriate match ups in the simplest, speediest, fairest and most effective possible configuration. All you have to do is select the most beneficial dribbling, shooting, 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 drill for developing the desired skill, and the matrices contained in this chapter will allow you to partner your players with a fair and balanced variety of opponents or team-mates for the duration of the practice.
Chapter Eighty-Three

Legends 1 v 1 & 2 v 2 Round Robin Tournaments Rock!

“It’s not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or when the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena. Whose face is marred by dust, sweat and blood. Who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings. Who knows the great enthusiasms and great devotions and spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement and who at worst if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory or defeat.”

Theodore Roosevelt

Every coach faces a consistent organizational challenge. Overcoming this challenge can provide maximal utilization of practice time and, therefore, optimize the effectiveness of each practice. “Round Robin” matrices allow the coach to match up players fairly and equally with different opponents and teammates during a practice. Round robins can be used for 1 v 1’s and 2 v 2’s. This creates a competitive challenge that is both fair and meaningful for the players while stretching each player to the limit of their technical, tactical, physical and mental ability.

The round robin matrix should be used in conjunction with the record keeping form. Each player is allocated a number. If two goalkeepers are needed the coach can select two players to go in goal for the whole practice or rotate field players into goal. To rotate goalkeepers in 1 v 1 the coach should use the match up denoted by either* or @ in each round. Where the drill being evaluated does not need goalkeepers the coach should ignore the * and @ symbols. In all 1 v 1 matrices player #1 plays #2, #3 plays #4 etc, in the first round. All drills utilized with a round robin format should involve all the players simultaneously. The coach must evaluate available time for the round robin competition and decide the best length for each round.

Advantages of the 1 v 1 Round Robin System of Development

For developing technique, micro-tactics, physical fitness and mental toughness there is no better exercise than 1 v 1. The inherent components ensure that players have to use and refine:

- The widest range of creative offensive and destructive defensive technique.
- The most concentrated intense offensive and defensive tactical knowledge.
- A greater percentage of all three physical systems, plus other components of physical fitness i.e. strength, agility, coordination, flexibility, touch, balance.
- Maximum levels of psychological focus & concentration. In 1 v 1, mental errors are punished more often while mental readiness and fitness is rewarded to a greater degree.
Chapter Eighty-Four

1 v 1 “Dog Eat Dog” Round Robin Explanation

One of the major coaching challenges is optimizing practice. The 1 v 1 system allows for the highest possible level of organization and efficiency, while providing objective statistical measures of performance and promoting player motivation through knowledge of results. The 1 v 1 record keeping form is used in conjunction with the appropriate round robin matrix to guarantee one match up with every other player at practice. The names of all field players are listed on the left hand side of each form. Dedicated goalkeeper stats will be recorded in the last two rows on the form. The coach should count the number of field players involved in the 1 v 1 practice and choose the appropriate round robin matrix. In the first round player #1 usually plays against player #2, player #3 against #4 and so on. All players play simultaneously. The first player in each named pair gets possession to start the game. He must begin at the nearest goal and attack the far goal. If he scores he retains possession but attacks the other goal. This, “make it, take it,” system discourages defenders from allowing an easy goal in anticipation of getting the next possession and evens up possible statistical unfairness caused by differences in effectiveness between the two goalkeepers. If either player misses a shot the ball is still live. There are no out of bounds areas, therefore no downtime. If a goalkeeper takes possession by either hand or foot, the ball is given to the player who was defending that goal at the moment the goalie gained possession. All rebounds are live. The coach determines the length of each 1 v 1 round. It is strongly suggested that all rounds are of the same duration to maintain the statistical objectivity of the overall scores. The coach should select the length of each round with the following in mind:

- Total length of practice to be dedicated to 1 v 1.
- Number of 1 v 1 rounds to be fitted in.
- Estimated time needed between rounds for collecting scores
- Additional projected time needed between rounds for coaching applicable 1 v 1 techniques and tactics

A count down alarm wristwatch is recommended for the process of alerting the coach when each round is complete. The countdown alarm should be set at the appropriate length of time chosen for each round, and started after all match ups have been read to the players for the round in question. At the end of each round the coach should call time. Play should be extended slightly to avoid taking away a good scoring opportunity and time should be called when all pairs are in a relatively neutral position. Any scoring shot struck as or before the coach calls the end of the round, will count. At the end of each round players should gather round the coach and provide the result of their match up when asked. If there is a disagreement each player will name his own score for the round. When collecting results the coach should ask each individual for his score because attempting to cross-reference each pair from the round robin matrix slows down the process of collecting the data. The result should be recorded in two places. For example if player #1 beats player #2 by 1 goal to 0 in the first round the result will be recorded in the first row, first
column as 1-0 and in the second row, first column as 0-1. This process should be repeated for all
match ups in each round before coaching, or before allocating new opponents for the next round.
If there is an uneven number of field players involved in the 1 v 1 competition the last player
listed will not play in round one. In each subsequent round one player will be without an
opponent. While all the other players are playing 1 v 1 this player could be instructed to practice
a specific area of weakness in his game, e.g. individual fakes and moves for beating an opponent
or go in goal. Once a round has begun the coach should take every opportunity to coach while
play continues. Avoid freezing the play if possible because this will cause frustration and alter
the validity of the statistical results. There is plenty of time between rounds for group coaching
points. The coach should set appropriate conditions for each session or round of 1 v 1’s. The
progression of 1 v 1 conditions is listed earlier in the book. One favorite is to demand a fake on
each possession prior to scoring. This helps prevent cheap goals and mandates the use of
dribbling deception on each possession. During the practice statistics should be recorded
cumulatively so that once all the match ups have been completed the coach can quickly calculate
finishing rankings.
It should be noted that there are six totals columns on the “dog eat dog” sheet. The first column
is for total goals scored. The second is for goals conceded. The third is for goal difference. These
can be minus figures, plus figures, or in rare cases neutral figures. The last three columns are for
positions within the group. The fourth column is for ranking based on goals scored. The fifth
ranks positions based on goals conceded. The sixth ranks positions based on goal difference. The
evaluation form also has a row for each player’s effort score for the round.
Chapter Eighty-Five

Dog Eat Dog 1 v 1 Scoring - Interpretation Of Results

The easiest method of scoring is where each player is awarded points for every round as follows: 3 for a win, 1 for a tie and 0 for a loss. For each round the coach keeps a cumulative record of each player’s points for and against so that he can update their standings as they go. For example, where player 1 has 3 points from his first game and 1 from the second, the coach will simply record a 4 in column two of that individual’s second column on the recording sheet.

The slightly more complicated but statistically informative record is where both player’s goals for and goals against are recorded for each round. The coach asks each player for her score at the end of each round. The point scores are recorded one by one before reading off the next round’s match ups. For each round the coach keeps a cumulative record of each player’s points for and against so that he can update the standings as he goes. For example where a player wins his first game 3-1 and loses the second 1-2, the coach will simply record a 3-1 in column one and 4-3 in column two of that player’s individual row on the record sheet.

The record-keeping format that provides the greatest motivation is where scores are kept in the second fashion described above but each player rates their effort on a scale of 0-10 at the end of every round. 0 being the lowest possible and 10 being the best possible. This personal effort score is recorded and cumulatively totaled during practice. It is ranked at the conclusion of the session. This round by round recording of effort has an amazing positive effect on motivation and commitment.

Interpretation of Results

This exercise is primarily a measure of a player’s ability in the 1 v 1. The coach is cautioned to use this as only a partial measure of effectiveness for the game situation because 1 v 1 is only a part of the larger game. However, when the objective statistical results are combined with subjective observation, 1 v 1 is a tremendous measure of individual technical and micro-tactical ability. Success in 1 v 1 reflects a combination of the following components:

- Speed
- Power
- Aggression
- Mental toughness
- Anaerobic fitness
- Aerobic fitness
- Dribbling skill
- Finishing ability
- Tackling effectiveness
- Offensive and defensive tactical awareness
- Reaction time
The most important of the three evaluation categories, i.e. goals for, goals against and goal difference, is goal difference. This measures both offensive and defensive capability consequently success in this category indicates a more complete player. A player with a high level finish in all three categories may be ideally suited to a mid-field role if he combines this with excellent vision and combination skills. A player finishing relatively high in the goals for category, yet relatively low in the goals against category, may be more suited to an offensive role. The opposite is true of a player who finishes high on the defensive scale, yet low on the offensive. This individual will probably be more suited to a defensive role. A player who finishes on the low end in all three categories will need to show exceptional tactical awareness in the game situation if he is to make a contribution corresponding with that of players finishing with a high score in either or both categories.

On the following page is an example of a completed post practice 1 v 1 form:
In this example the team is a U15 boys squad. Everyone plays each other once for four minutes. The total actual 1 v 1 playing time is 52 minutes, broken down into 13 rounds of 1 v 1 at 4 minutes per round. With time for a comprehensive warm up, plus a one-minute water & statistical recording break between rounds of 1 v 1, the practice used every second of the 90 minute allotted time. Full size goals are positioned 20-25 yards apart. There is a keeper in each goal. The surrounding field area is live, i.e. there are no boundaries. At the end of each round players gather for water and give the coach their score. Goalkeepers keep track of goals conceded and compete with each other to concede the least goals.

**Conditions imposed in this practice example were as follows:**

- Players had to perform a recognized fake from the curriculum before shooting. Failure to shoot on play-away resulted in loss of goal scored and possession.
- Shots had to be struck on the play away after the fake. No extra touches before shooting were allowed. Failure to shoot on the play away resulted in the loss of both the goal scored and possession.
- Goals only counted if shot hit the inside side netting of goal. Failure to hit inside side netting of the goal resulted in the loss of both goal scored and possession.
- All shots had to be struck with reasonable power to count. Failure to strike shot with reasonable power resulted in the loss of both the goal scored and possession.
- The shooting player had to follow the shot immediately for rebounds. Any failure to explode and follow the shot immediately resulted in the loss of the goal and possession.
- The game was “make it take it”, i.e. players who scored retained possession but had to attack the other goal after scoring. Note this rule evened up any statistical differences resulting from differences in goalkeeping abilities.
## ONE V ONE EVALUATION FORM EXAMPLE

**Team:** U15 Boys  
**Date:** May 5th 1998

### Round #

| Player Name | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | Goals let in | Goals let in |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Joe      | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 30 | 23 + 7 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| 2. Ryan     | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 27 | 11 +16 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 3. John     | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 17 | 21 - 4 | 9 | 9 | 11 |
| 4. Geoff    | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 23 | 16 + 7 | 5 | 4 | 3 |
| 5. Jeff     | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 20 | 19 + 1 | 8 | 8 | 6 |
| 6. Jim      | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 24 | 13 + 1 | 4 | 11 | 6 |
| 7. Drew     | 4 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 24 | 23 + 1 | 4 | 11 | 6 |
| 8. Chris    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 27 -24 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| 9. Brad     | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 27 -24 | 14 | 14 | 14 |
| 10. Chuck   | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 27 | 13 +14 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 11. Cody    | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 27 | 13 +14 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 12. Mike    | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 13 | 19 - 6 | 12 | 6 | 12 |
| 13. Aaron   | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 19 - 6 | 12 | 6 | 12 |
| 14. Alan    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 15 | 15 - 10 | 3 | 9 |

**Moves:** Swivel-Swivel, Pull Back Behind Leg, Matthews, Matthews/Scissors, Half Scissors, Single Scissors, Double/Multiple Scissors, Puskas, Cruyff, Rivelino, Swivel Step-over, Maradona, Tap N Play Behind Leg, Stop Hop N Roll, Ronaldinho
Chapter Eighty-Six

2 v 2 Round-Robin – Size Matters - Smaller Is Better!

In the years since Holland won the 1988 European Championship there has been an international movement to embrace the KNVB, (Dutch Federation), 4 v 4 training concept. The reasons given for adopting 4 v 4 as a training tool centered around two major benefits.

Firstly 4 v 4 gives the ball carrier three potential passing options on every possession:
- Penetrating
- Square
- Trail.

Secondly 4 v 4 gives each player an average of 12.5% of playing time on the ball during the training session.

However, while 4 v 4 is a good training tool it is not the best for training players to play at the very highest levels. When examined from the perspective of creative development and the essential emphasis on high-risk play, it becomes obvious that the inclusion of a backward passing option discourages the relentless pursuit of penetration and, by its very existence, will promote negative play, especially in the less adventurous player. It is only by total dedication to the high creative risk “Training Soccer Legends” coaching philosophy that great players will be developed. Therefore, any training component that encourages, or gives an option for, backward passing, takes away the need to “go for it” that exists when only penetrating options are available. 2 v 2 is a much better option because it encourages teammates to provide forward support and also challenges the ball carrier to find penetrating, creative solutions to the attacking problem. Furthermore 2 v 2 gives each player an average time for ball possession of 25%. This doubles individual opportunity to develop creative skills and awareness on the ball. 100% more time in possession of the ball makes it a statistical certainty that a player will learn to be more effective in developing the technical skills necessary to be successful at a higher level than players on other teams who enjoy less possession in their training environment. Furthermore, the extra time spent assessing options, under pressure, while on the ball, will guarantee a greater ability to recognize the creative solution to the tactical problems posed by the offensive equation.

By comparison 3 v 3 is also a poorer option than 2 v 2. This is because 2 v 2 offers each child more shooting, passing and dribbling options than 3 v 3. Though there is no option to pass to a third teammate in 2 v 2, first time passing and shooting skills are challenged to a greater degree because players enjoy more ball possession, therefore opportunities to shoot or pass early occur more often. However, the greatest comparative benefit comes from the increased number of total touches on the ball. Players enjoy 50% more time on the ball when playing 2 v 2 as opposed to 3 v 3. Therefore, a player who normally gets 100 ball touches in 3 v 3 will enjoy 150 touches when playing 2 v 2. This intense involvement develops individual skills and tactical vision faster, is
more fun and reinforces self-concept at a far greater rate. Furthermore, with the unique 2 v 2 matrices of the “Training Soccer Legends” program the coach is able to create fairer match ups and structure the games so that the final scores and rankings reflect individual influence and impact more accurately. The Legends 2 v 2 matrices divide the players so that in every round each player plays with a new teammate and matches up with a new opponent. This is a really positive component of the “Training Soccer Legends” system because it is always more fun to play each game with a new teammate against a greater variety of opposition. Due to the simplicity and efficiency of the Legends matrices the coach can organize practice more efficiently and maximize both the fun and learning factor.

**Important Quick Note:** When combined with statistical record keeping and knowledge of results, the shorter round robin games and greater variety of opposition inherent within the “Training Soccer Legends” system motivates players to try harder and perform with higher intensity for a significantly greater proportion of practice. When larger, randomly selected teams, play each other in fewer games of longer duration without statistical consequences much of this extra motivation is lost.

**Other Benefits of Playing 2 v 2 Versus Games With More Players**

2 v 2 also demands that each player takes a greater level of responsibility and make a bigger contribution towards the success of the team. In 2 v 2 there is no place to hide, therefore players have to be more involved and learn how to influence the outcome of the competition to a greater degree. This extra responsibility leads to quicker development, healthier levels of self-concept plus an ever-increasing ability to take charge and have a positive impact on the full game situation.

Another consideration is the imbalance in individual ability within all group activities. One of the greatest problems in larger sided games has been including the weaker players and challenging the stronger ones. Even in 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 the weaker player gets less relative possession than in 2 v 2 because there are more people sharing one ball. Added to this, the stronger players often won’t pass to him as often and practice becomes a futile exercise in unrewarded effort. In 2 v 2 the weaker player has to be involved because he is the only possible target for a pass from a teammate. Both as a youth and adult player I often passed only to my stronger teammates. This policy was motivated by the desire to win but also because I wanted the ball back which didn’t often happen when I passed to my weaker teammates. Kids today are no different. They will choose to pass to the better player because she can score or she can hold the ball under pressure and get it back to them more often. Playing Legends style 2 v 2 allows the coach to break the groups up into more homogenous units, but at the very least ensures each player a greater variety of opponents and a high level of ball contact. For all the above reasons it makes little developmental sense to split 8 kids into one 4 v 4 game when they can play two 2 v 2 games. Whenever there is a larger ratio of players to one ball, individual effort dwindles and the pace of the game slows considerably. Furthermore, direct player involvement drops and motivation ebbs away. In contrast, by using the “Training Soccer Legends” 2 v 2 matrices, a coach can rotate players through four teams to make competition fair, meaningful, motivating and developmental.
A further benefit of the “Training Soccer Legends” system is that the 2 v 2 round robin matrices help the coach make the practice groupings more homogenous. Given any number of participating players greater than 8 the coach can create two more homogenous player groups where the better players play separately from the weaker players in each round. Using the round-robin matrices the coach can divide and assess the kids individually to create fairer, developmentally appropriate competition within each 2 v 2 player group. This will make the games more meaningful for the players while keeping each kid at the appropriate level of challenge and situational reinforcement necessary to facilitate optimum development.

**Important Quick Note:** The two conflicting principles of homogeneity and diversity will always be better reconciled when smaller sided games are utilized. As coaches and teachers we need to do what is developmentally appropriate for long-term growth, even when it lessens the odds of the statistical win in the team’s next game. Parents and coaches should be more concerned about their children enjoying the optimum level of challenge with the appropriate number of ball touches, and less concerned about team statistical success in the full-sided game. Cosmetic image has never been a strong point of the “Training Soccer Legends” method. Legends style practices inevitably burn the grass off most of the training surface and often appear to be exercises in mass confusion. However, the results have been spectacular. The value of smaller-sided games is easy to recognize simply because the players get at least 50% more ball touches. This value is enhanced because these touches occur under pressure, in front of goal, i.e. in the clutch defensive and offensive area of the field. When combined with all the other positive benefits detailed in this book the developmental rewards of this approach are overwhelming.
Chapter Eighty-Seven

2 v 2 Match Ups, Methods and Scoring

The 2 v 2 matrix is designed to assess the effectiveness of players in the smallest version of team soccer, i.e. the two on two. For this assessment vehicle the goals are positioned 20-25 yards apart. If possible a permanent goalkeeper is designated for each goal. The “Training Soccer Legends matrices are designed to accommodate any number of practice participants. When setting up the record sheet write the names of the players only on the left hand side in the first column. Wherever possible the matrices have been designed so that two of the four players in each round remain constant. However, these two players only play head to head against each other in one round and only play on the same team together in one round. For the rest of the 2 v 2 match ups these two players play on opposing teams and match up with the other opponent. On the 8, 10, 12, 14 & 16 player 2 v 2 round robin sheets, players of equal ability can be matched up to make the games as fair as possible. At the start of the 2 v 2 round robin the coach should match players in the way described on the 8, 10, 12, 14 & 16 player matrices so that the two opponents who consistently play in the same 2 v 2 on opposite teams are of similar ability. Because two of the players in each 2 v 2 game are of similar ability the final statistics are a truer reflection of how each player matches up against and plays with, different individuals. Furthermore, taking the time to make sure that no team has either the two best or two worst players ensures that the developmental value of every 2 v 2 match up is optimized. In all 2 v 2 games the first listed player from team one on the matrix is designated to mark the first listed player from team two. The 2nd listed players for each team mark each other. This process is repeated for all games in the round. Please note that all 2 v 2 games in each round are played simultaneously on the same field. Also note that teams must not be separated by color. Differentiating teams by color wastes organizational time but more importantly encourages players to play to a “flash of color” instead of using visual and verbal communication to make sure that passes are delivered at the appropriate moment. A “make it, take it” system is used where if your team scores in one goal it retains the ball and attacks the other goal. This nullifies any imbalance in ability between the two goalkeepers.

Methods of Scoring

The methods of scoring are threefold:

A) The easiest method of scoring to track is where each player is awarded points for every round as follows: 3 for a win, 1 for a tie and 0 for a loss. The scores should be added cumulatively as the rounds are completed.

B) A more complicated but informative statistical record is where a player is awarded 1 point for every goal he scores, 1 point for every assist he provides and 1 extra point if his team wins the round. Each player is also deducted 1 point each time the player he is marking scores and, at the end of the round, 1 more point if his team loses. The coach will quickly call out each player’s name at the end of each round and record the scores one by one before reading off the next round match ups. For each round the coach will
keep a cumulative record of each player’s points so that he can update their individual standings as they go. For example where player 1 has 3 points from his first game and 2 from the second the coach will simply record 5 in column two of that individual’s row on the record sheet.

C) The record-keeping format that provides the greatest motivation is where scores are kept in the fashion described under B above, but in addition each player rates their work rate on a round by round basis. At the end of every round each player ranks her effort on a 0-10 scale, 0 being the lowest possible and 10 being the best possible effort score. This personal effort score is recorded and totaled cumulatively during practice and then ranked at the conclusion of the session. This round by round recording of effort has an amazing positive effect on habitual motivation and commitment. As the old saying goes “you can expect what you inspect”.

“In early childhood you may lay the foundation of poverty or riches, industry or idleness, good or evil, by the habits to which you train your children. Teach them right habits then, and their future life is safe.”
Lydia Sigourney

“Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.”
Aristotle

Quick Note: The blank 1 v 1 and 2 v 2 matrices are provided later in the book
**COMPLETED TWO V TWO EVALUATION FORM** (Note: This form used method B above)

**TEAM-U15 Boys**  
**DATE- MAY 7th 1998**

| Player # | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| **Player Name** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1. Joe | 5 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 16 | 17 | 22 | 24 | 25 | 29 | 31 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 2. Ryan | -1 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 22 | 25 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 3. John | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 18 | 21 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 4. Geoff | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 5. Jeff | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 14 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 20 | 25 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 6. Jim | 1 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 17 | 18 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 7. Drew | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 15 | 19 | 21 | 24 | 26 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 8. Chris | 0 | -1 | -2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 9. Brad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 16 | 18 | 19 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 21 |
| 10. Chuck | 2 | 3 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 17 | 21 | 22 | 25 | 25 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 11. Cody | 1 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 14 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 12. Mike | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 11 | 15 | 16 | 19 | 21 | 21 | 21 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 | 22 |
| 13. Aaron | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 8 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 14. Alan | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 14 | 14 | 15 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 15. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 16. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 17. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 18. |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 19. Zack - GK |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Goals conceded | 10 | 13 | 13 | 11 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 12 | 7 | 12 | 10 | 13 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 20. Brett – GK |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Goals conceded | 14 | 11 | 13 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 13 | 10 | 11 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Moves: Swivel-Swivel, Pull Back Behind Leg, Matthews, Matthews/Scissors, Half Scissors, Single Scissors, Double/Multiple Scissors, Puskas, Cruyff, Rivelino, Swivel Step Over, Maradona, Tap N Play Behind Leg, Stop Hop N Roll, Ronaldinho
Chapter Eighty-Eight
Legends Drill for Teaching Shooting Technique

One of the major coaching challenges is the organization of practice to realize optimum developmental benefits. The 1 v 1 shooting scenario detailed below allows for the maximum number of challenging technical repetitions and the highest possible level of organization, while providing an objective statistical measure of performance and promoting player motivation through knowledge of results.

1 V 1 shooting
One of the best drills for maximizing technical repetition and development in shooting during the earlier stages of learning is the finishing drill described as follows:

Playing area and equipment
You will need enough cones to set up one goal for every two players, a reasonably flat field and 1 ball for every two players.

Structure
The cones are arranged in a straight line four yards apart in the middle of the field as illustrated. The players stand on either side of the cone goal.

Procedure

Position two players on opposite sides of the cone goals. U6’s should be six yards from the goal line, U7’s seven yards, U8’s eight yards from the goal line, etc up to U18’s eighteen yards from the goal line.
The coach should use the 1 v 1 record keeping form in conjunction with the appropriate round robin matrix, (blank matrices are detailed later in the book), to guarantee one match up with every other player at practice. The players should be listed on the left hand side of the 1 v 1 form. The coach should count the number of field players involved in the shooting practice and choose the appropriate round robin matrix. In the first round player #1 usually plays against player #2, player #3 against #4 and so on. All players play simultaneously. The first player in each pair named, gets to shoot first to start the game. He must begin at the appropriate distance from the goal, designated by the coach, and shoot through the goal to get the ball past his opponent. If he gets the ball through the cones in accordance with the rules of the game a rally begins that continues until the point is over. If a player misses a shot, takes more set up touches than allowed, hits the ball over 4 feet high or has to run backwards to field an opponent’s shot he loses the point. Other conditions to train the appropriate response, such as the type of shooting technique to be used and shooting within 2 seconds of taking the first touch, can be imposed as proficiency improves. There are no out of bounds areas, therefore no downtime. If a ball strikes a player involved in another match up the game proceeds as if the contact had not occurred. This means that all rebounds off other players are live. The coach determines the length of each 1 v 1 round.

**Statistical Assessment of the Shooting Drill**

It is suggested that all rounds are of the same duration to maintain the statistical objectivity of overall results. The coach should select the length of each round with the following in mind:

- Total length of practice
- Number of rounds to be fitted in
- Estimated time between rounds for collecting scores
- Projected time needed between rounds for coaching shooting techniques and tactics

A count down alarm watch is recommended for the process of alerting the coach when each round is complete. This alarm should be set at the appropriate length of time chosen for each round, and started after all match ups have been read to the players for the round in question.

At the end of each round the coach should call time. Any scoring shot struck before the coach calls the end of the round will count. The players should be brought in and asked for the result of their match up. If there is any discrepancy each player will name his own score for the round. Once a round has begun the coach should take every opportunity to “coach” while play continues. Freezing the play briefly on a pair by pair basis, is encouraged so that a technique can be taught correctly. Remember, there is plenty of time between rounds for group coaching points. The coach has the option of setting additional conditions for a session of shooting. One favorite in teaching the instep drive is to demand that the shooter lands on his shooting foot otherwise he loses the point. This encourages the correct technique every time a player takes a power shot. Once all match ups have been completed the coach should record the final cumulative total and handle the communication of final positions and scores with great sensitivity to the needs and ages of the players concerned.
It should be noted that there are six totals columns on the “dog eat dog” (1 v 1) sheet. The first column is for total goals scored. The second is for goals conceded. The third is for goal difference. This can be a minus figure, plus figure, or in rare cases, a neutral figure. The last three columns are for positions within the overall player group. The fourth column is for rankings based upon points won. The fifth is for rankings based upon points lost. The sixth is for rankings based upon the point total difference.

**Alternative Method Of Keeping Score**

When recording shooting it may help speed up the recording process by keeping a round by round cumulative points total. The time to record scores will be reduced by awarding 3 points for each win, 1 for each tie and 0 for a loss. Adding each player’s points cumulatively after each round also saves having to go back and add them at the end of the practice.

**Game Rules and Conditioning the 1 v 1 Shooting Process:**

- The player who has or retrieves the ball when a point is won, takes the next serve/shot. This rule maximizes the number of shots taken and therefore the benefit of the drill.
- Serve/shoot from the appropriate distance. This is variable per age group.
- When shooting the object is to score by getting the ball between the cones. Any shot hitting or going over the top of or outside of the cone is a lost point for the shooter.
- In all shooting techniques except for the chip the ball must be kept low, (under 4 feet high), and pass through the cones. In the case of the chip shot the ball must pass through the cones at a height of over 6 feet.
- The shooter gets one or two touches to control the opponent's shot and one more to shoot it back through the cones. This is variable according to age and ability. Any player taking more touches than allowed before shooting the ball loses the point.
- Every shot must be taken with the strong foot. Please refer to section on “training the strong foot only” to understand the rationale for this condition.
- Any ball passing the receiver is an "Ace". This means that the shooter wins the point and the receiver starts the next point with a dead ball serve.
- Each game is played for a set amount of time based upon how many players are in each group. Ideally each player in a group will play every other player for somewhere between 3-6 minutes.

Using this drill the coach can train players in all ground based shooting techniques simply by specifying their use as follows:

- Shooting with the laces (Instep) of the foot – the low drive power shot.
- Shooting with the outside of the foot – the flick shot.
- Shooting with the inside of the foot – the push shot.
- Shooting with the outside of the foot – the banana or bending shot.
- Shooting with the inside of the foot - the banana or bending shot.
- Shooting with the upper toe or lower laces of the foot – the chip shot.
By having players serve the ball up in the air to themselves the coach can also train players in all air based shooting techniques as follows:

- Shooting with the inside of the foot – the volley.
- Shooting with the laces (Instep) of the foot – the volley.
- Shooting with the laces (Instep) of the foot – the side-volley.
- Shooting with the laces (Instep) of the foot – the half-volley

To use this drill while grooving volleying technique, the server will throw the ball up and perform the designated action as the ball drops. At the other end the receiver will control the server’s shot with his feet, pick the ball up and return volley by throwing the ball up within two seconds of first touching it.
Chapter Eighty-Nine

Match Analysis and Motivation Legends Style

Legends teams play 60 to 70 games per year. The whole training program is geared initially toward developing players who are capable of using the difficult creative dribbling and finishing skills they have learned under pressure in the “Training Soccer Legends” practice system. Eventually these dribbling skills are integrated with quick combination plays. A match analysis system that provides incentive and reward for use of these creative skills is essential to motivate players to constantly attempt these skills in the combative skirmishes that occur around the ball in a real game. Without a system of incentive, reward and recognition the players are more likely to resort to the easier solutions involved with passing and/or kicking the ball up field. The simpler passing or kicking option is more likely to be used in competitive matches because there are unique pressures involved with the game situation that make the use of creative dribbling and shooting skills much harder than in practice. For the young player who is still not totally comfortable with using moves and shooting under game conditions, the effect of spectators, unfamiliar opponents, pressure to win the game, fear of making a crucial mistake and many other factors, make playing with tremendous creative skill in the real game environment a daunting experience. A well thought out match analysis system designed to reward the effort and performance of creative dribbling, finishing, penetrating combinations and outstanding goalie saves, will prove to be a tremendous asset in the successful transference of these skills from the practice environment to the game situation. Because of the variation of player ages and individual abilities involved, any system used must allow for a sequential progression in the difficulty of the tasks used as goals. This sequential progression is stage related not age related. For example novice players of 14 should be set easier targets than 12 year olds with six years of experience in the “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy. The incentives and rewards for the older novice will have a lower factor of difficulty than for the younger, yet more accomplished player. One of the major justifications of this match analysis system is that it minimizes the attention paid to team wins and losses while maximizing the focus on creative individual performance. This puts the emphasis on the more difficult and risky creative skills and tactics so essential if a player is to become a “big play” making ball wizard. In this system every player is capable of achieving success and amassing points because the individual performance targets involve difficult but attainable creative skills that encourage players to take greater risks and elevate their game.

The following is a list of progressive incentives. These have all been used as motivators and measurements in the “Training Soccer Legends” match analysis system:

- Any attempt to perform a fake on the ball.
- A successful fake that retains possession.
- A successful fake that penetrates in an up field direction i.e. moves the ball toward the opponent’s goal.
• A successful fake that retains possession followed by an attempt to pass that might not retain possession.
• A successful fake that retains possession followed by a pass in any direction that retains possession.
• A successful fake that retains possession followed by a penetrating (forward) pass that retains possession.
• Any attempted shot.
• Any shot on target that is blocked or forces a save.
• Any scoring shot.
• A first time pass, or pass after a successful fake, that retains possession and penetrates.
• Any first time shot.
• Any first time shot on target.
• Any first time scoring shot.
• Any shot that follows a fake.
• Any shot on target that follows a fake.
• Any scoring shot following a fake.
• Any shot that follows a combination play.
• Any shot on target that follows a combination play.
• Any scoring shot following a combination play.

Please note: Each of these conditions can be stand alone or used in combination with others.

An example of the match analysis conditions and points system for a beginner would be as follows:
• Any attempt to perform a fake on the ball – 1 Point
• Any attempted shot – 1 Point
• Any scoring shot – 3 Points

An example of the match analysis conditions and points scoring system for an experienced Legend player would be as follows:
• A first time pass – 1 Point
• A pass after a successful fake that retains possession and penetrates – 1 Point
• Any combination play or fake that retains possession and penetrates – 1 Point
• Any scoring shot – 2 Points
• Any first time scoring shot – 3 Points
• Any scoring shot following a fake – 3 Points
• Any scoring shot after a combination play or fake – 3 Points

It is very important to note that the system must be simple enough for one person to do all the statistical record keeping. The statistics should ideally be communicated at half and full-time of every game, therefore the criteria for points should be few, easy to recognize, understand and record.

The following is a completed game evaluation form:
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<th>1ST HALF</th>
<th>SUB TOTAL</th>
<th>2ND HALF</th>
<th>SUB TOTAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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Pre-Game Motivation
With regard to pre-game motivation it requires a sensitive coach to understand his players and team. Before pursuing a course of action a careful analysis of situational demands plus each player’s personality and ability is essential. The under-aroused soccer player must be recognized and stimulated, while the over-aroused player needs to be calmed and reassured. If the forthcoming competition is at all meaningful to the young player, certain patterns of anxiety will be demonstrated. Too little arousal will result in under achievement, while too much pressure and anxiety will result in errors in judgment and performance. Individual soccer players should be understood and respected for their differences. Motivation needs to be approached intelligently with regard for unique personal characteristics among performers. The coach should exhibit a sensitivity and understanding of dissimilarities among team members with respect to personality, values, reactions to incentives, situation etc. This will enable the coach to treat each athlete as needed.

In the “Training Soccer Legends” approach a major part of the pre-game motivational talk revolves around the importance of attempting to make the big play. The training curriculum is totally focused on the development of “Big Play” making ability and players are motivated before each game to approach the upcoming competition as an opportunity to take risks and demonstrate their deceptive dribbling and finishing skills under the pressure of game conditions. Players are constantly reminded that they must leave their “comfort zone” in order to grow because all positive progress is made by doing things differently and better than in previous performances.

In Game Motivation
The coach must have the ability to recognize the motivational needs of each player while the game is progressing. Advice should be given at the appropriate moment and has to be delivered in such a way as to educate the player and improve subsequent performance. The “Training Soccer Legends” method promotes the use of a points for performance match analysis statistical evaluation system that is designed to reinforce the use of the deceptive dribbling fakes and moves plus shots and penetrating passes.

Important Quick Note: The coach will maximize the benefits from this form of “in game” motivation if he constantly encourages his players to focus on the actions that will earn them points and provides loud and positive vocal reinforcement when a player earns points. The players love this coaching approach because it is public recognition and praise for their efforts. The parents love this approach because it makes their precious child feel good and provides positive public reinforcement for all their sacrifices. For both the player and parents this helps make all their dedication worthwhile.
Chapter Ninety

Suggestions To Speed Creative Learning

The “Training Soccer Legends” warm-up helps to improve skills and avoid injury while preparing players physiologically and psychologically for the highest level of play.

The Common Mistake

Many coaches and parents let their kids arrive at the soccer field just a minute or two before kick off. The kids have been sitting in the car, their legs have seized in the bent position and their frame of mind and readiness of body is exactly the opposite of what will be required a few short minutes. Before each game younger players should arrive 30 minutes early and work on the “Training Soccer Legends” fakes and shooting techniques for at least 20 minutes.

This habit reaps dividends in many different ways as follows:

- **Extra Practice** - The average Legends player competes in 8 to 12 tournaments per year and has a league game once or twice per week from August to June. The average Legend team plays about 60 games per year. Therefore, an extra 20 minutes of practice on improving foot skills and ball striking prior to each game will result in over 20 additional practice hours. The difference between levels of play are often so small that changing one, relatively insignificant aspect of development can mean the difference between having to end a sporting career early or moving up to the higher levels of play. The pre-game skill practice equates to a significant potential training opportunity and can make a huge difference to a players’ ability to perform a technically correct fake under pressure in the game situation.

- **Skill Grooving** - Correct technical repetition makes the use of the appropriate nerves and muscles more automatic with each action. Performing moves and shooting for 20 minutes before each game, will create a “deeper groove” for each fake or shot and bring those physical actions to the very edge of muscle memory in readiness for their use a few minutes later in the game situation.

- **Traditional Warm Up Benefits** - A cold muscle is less capable of functioning effectively. The 20 minutes working on moves and fakes elevates the body and muscle temperature to appropriate levels for improving flexibility and subsequent game performance. After 20 minutes of moves players will have worked up a good sweat and prepared their muscles for pre-game dynamic stretching and the stresses of competition. This type of warm up has the extra benefit of preparing the neuromuscular system for the most difficult movement patterns in soccer, thereby readying the body for all other motions of the game.

Many players indulge in casual conversation up until the moment they wander out on to the field. Consequently, it takes them the first part of the game to get warmed up and play to their
potential. Without a good physical and mental warm up performance will suffer. The fake and move warm up players prepares players optimally for the challenge ahead.

**Mental Rehearsal**
During the warm up each player should be envisaging the best areas of the field and appropriate situations for the use of the move or shot they are practicing. Mental rehearsal has been proven as an effective means of training the body to reproduce a better technical action when later combined with the physical performance of a skill.

**Injury Avoidance**
One of the important ancillary benefits of being a great dribbler is longevity of career and avoidance of injury. Even though they were “marked men” the great players of history avoided serious injury and played until they were veterans by general professional standards. Puskas, Garrincha, Pele, Zico, Platini, Cruyff, Maradona and many other very skillful players enjoyed far longer than average careers at the highest level. This is for two reasons. The first and most obvious is that their exceptional skills made them players capable of producing “big plays” and winning key games even as they began to slow down physically. The second is a hypothesis that seems very logical. These players over the course of a lifetime of dribbling became marked men for the most aggressive of opponents. As a consequence of learning to be great dribblers these players developed elite levels of coordination, balance, agility, flexibility, deception and strength under pressure. All these factors help a player to avoid injury. However, perhaps the key component in injury avoidance is kinesthetic awareness. This is the sense of the body’s position relative to space and time. Great dribblers develop effective radar for the proximity of opponents. This is a “bats in a cave” quality that allows the elite dribbler to sense the safest and most effective response to a defender’s challenge in a way that less talented players can’t. This sixth sense may allow the great dribbler to avoid the leg breaking tackle or to avoid twisting a knee in a way that could be damaging to a cruciate ligament. As a consequence of the greater psychological awareness of the potentially injurious challenge and/or the physical capabilities brought about by decades of deceptive dribbling, it would appear that ball wizards enjoy a far greater incidence of injury avoidance and career longevity than the average professional player.

**Warm Up Structure and Policies for Players U13 and Below**
For all the above reasons, the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum recommends instituting the following warm up structure and policies for younger players.

- Each player must bring a properly inflated ball to every game.
- Players must be at the game and actively warming up 30 minutes prior to kick off.
- For the first 10 minutes of the warm up players must perform all the Legends fakes and moves with an emphasis on exiting the move on the strong foot only.
- If a player tires during the fake and move warm up, the physical break needed to recover should be occupied with mental rehearsal of desirable “big plays”.
- Between the 10th and 20th minute of the warm up players should partner up and practice shooting and 1 v 1 going to goal.
• Between the 20th minute and game time players should play 1 v 1 or 2 v 2 going to goal.
• Immediately before kick-off bring the players round to focus them on making the “big plays” that will eventually earn them the opportunity to play at a higher level.

Warm Up Structure and Policies for Players U14 and Above

• Each player must bring a properly inflated ball to every game.
• Players must be at game and actively warming up 30 minutes prior to kick off.
• For the first 10 minutes of the warm up players must perform all the Legends fakes and moves with an emphasis on exiting the move on the strong foot only.
• During the next 10 minutes of the warm up older players should complete an ACL injury prevention protocol involving squats, calf raises, lunges, plyometric bounding, wall jumping, one-hundred and eighty degree jumps, ski jumps etc. This is especially important for females. Please note that goalkeepers should be warmed up separately and stretch the upper body to a far greater degree, (the goalkeeper should stretch the total body for at least 10 minutes).
• Between the 20th minute of the warm up and game time the players should play 2 v 2 going to goal.
• Immediately before kick-off bring the players round to focus them on making the “big plays” that will eventually earn them the opportunity to play at a higher level.

Important Quick Note: Get players to grade their warm up on a 1 to 10 scale. Periodically call them round during the warm up to check the grade they have awarded themselves. This method makes them constantly aware that each moment counts. Try to paint a picture of the necessity to be ready to explode into the game at the first whistle. Momentum is a crucial factor in all sports and coaches who are too lazy to truly prepare their team to fight hard and play quickly from the start of the game will reap a legacy of early game player lethargy and lack of readiness throughout their playing career. A further benefit of this “grading” method is self-motivation. A coach who conducts the warm up for the players builds reliance upon his presence. This dependence on the coach comes back to haunt the player when he can’t be there for the warm up.

“Failing To Prepare Is Preparing To Fail”
Benjamin Franklin

Suggested System for Substitutions

• Select the most respected parent to do the subbing and the 2nd most respected parent to be assistant coach and substitution deputy when the 1st choice is absent.
• Play equal playing time.
• Sub every 10 minutes in outdoor soccer. Anything more results in inadvisable muscular cooling and greater subsequent risk of injury upon re-entry. Sub between 90 seconds and 120 seconds indoors. Anything more results in anaerobic overload, inability to recover fully between shifts and lowered work rate.
**Lines and positions**

These are only general principles. However, in the majority of instances this system provides the foundation for organizing the team effectively. First set defensive, midfield and offensive lines as follows:

- For outdoor play. Choose the best attackers first (fastest, most deceptive and most capable of scoring). Choose the best central defenders from those left over (fastest and most capable of destroying). Choose the best both way players from those left over to play in the central midfield. Finally choose the outside midfielders and outside defenders from the remaining players.

- For indoor play. In the first phase choose the best attackers first (fastest, most deceptive and most capable of scoring). Then choose the best defenders from those left over (fastest and most capable of destroying). Choose the midfielders from the rest.

As the team progresses players can be evaluated with a more experienced eye. The coach should make positional adjustments to his tournament line up as is appropriate.

In league play keep the offensive and defensive positions the same for half the league season. Switch the defenders and attackers at the mid-point of the season. Midfield stays where they are because they enjoy equal opportunity to both attack and defend in each game. Before each game find out who did not start the last game and start them.

**Benefits Of This Team Organization Structure**

- It’s fair. If there is a disagreement about playing time you can always bring in the parent who does the subbing to explain the system. This removes you, the coach, from the line of fire. Any complaints have to come from a parent or player wanting preferential as opposed to fair treatment. Preferential treatment should not be an option.

- If you are late for a game or have to leave early the parent who does the subbing can keep the organization on track. This lessens the stress of the other parents when you are late or can’t make it to a game.

- You have a hand chosen deputy in the box or on the sideline ready to step in if you are absent.

- It leaves you totally free of organizational distractions to handle your primary coaching responsibilities.

- You can still make any positional adjustments to handle in game challenges and it is easier to identify in game changes that have to be made when you do not have to focus on organizing substitutions.

- It’s organized. Players know where they will be playing before they get to the field and are better able to prepare for the ensuing challenge.

- There is no differentiation between starters and non-starters that can be detrimental to a non-starter’s self-concept.

- Everyone gets an equal opportunity to play offense and defense over the course of a season. This maximizes their ability to be a complete player.
Chapter Ninety-One

Training A Legend Is Impossible Without Homework

“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not: Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not: Un-rewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not: The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

Calvin Coolidge

Organized practice is a very small segment of a player’s week. In today’s society with its distractions, kids can now watch videos and DVD’s, play video games, instant message, surf the net, listen to CD and MP3 players. This is in addition to more traditional time wasters such as talking on the phone, watching TV and simply goofing around with friends. Inevitably the amount of time spent on developing soccer skills and playing “pick up” games has shrunk significantly by comparison with the 1960’s when I was a youngster in Britain. In this fragmented environment the chances of a young player dedicating his or her own time to soccer skills homework without some type of incentive or consequence is significantly reduced. Therefore, it is essential that the coach sets homework targets and keeps records as to who performs the assignments. The setting of homework establishes priorities for task orientation, completion and achievement. However, while setting homework is a good start, the difference between good and great is in structuring the environment and follow up. Expect what you inspect so keep a homework record and check up on who is doing their daily assignments at each practice. The “Training Soccer Legends” approach sets a homework target of 600 fakes/moves or 200 shots per day. However, each player is not limited to these targets and should attempt to surpass extrinsic goals with more challenging targets of their own. This is the essence of self-motivation and it should be emphasized that the program homework target is a minimum not optimum goal. On alternate days each fake/move of the 12 recommended should be performed at least 50 times. On every other day each of the 10 shooting techniques should be repeated a minimum of 20 times with the strong foot.

The individual developmental focus of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach is ideal for utilizing the extra opportunity provided by completing homework. This is because practicing fakes and learning to shoot are the two most intrinsically enjoyable practices in soccer. As in basketball where committed players love to shoot and dribble solo in the front driveway of their home, serious soccer players love to practice their shooting and moves. One more serious comparative disadvantage of the conventional coaching approach is that passing and receiving practice is a relative chore. Furthermore, passing and receiving practice tends to involve two or more people, is harder to organize and more difficult to schedule. As a consequence players with coaches who focus on passing and receiving don’t enjoy the same motivational homework benefits and don’t dedicate themselves to the long hours of fun ball play so vital to elite creative ball skill development.
The following is an illuminating quote from the Dutch “Grandmaster” Johan Cruyff:
“My generation learnt to play soccer in the street. Our skill levels greatly improved because of
the lack of space and the fact that there were few of us meant that we were always involved in the
game. The street was our soccer school. Players like Pele, Beckenbauer, Platini, Di Stefano and
myself all started by kicking a football, tin can, rubber ball or even rags in the street against
guys who would fight to get the ‘ball’ off you. You had to rely on your quick thinking and your
skill when playing against these guys, because not only were they bigger than you, but space was
tight and you were often under great pressure. During those games I’d use walls, my teammates
and even the curbs of the pavement. My favorite move was to kick the ball against a wall and
control the rebound whilst running at speed, as this split second was often the crucial difference
between a great goal or loss of possession”.

Cruyff goes on with passion in his voice: “Youngsters need to develop a close personal
relationship with the ball. They need to get to know it and love it as quality is only achieved
through many hours of lonely practice. When I played for Ajax juniors, each boy had a football
with his name on. In Spain, at the grass roots level often there is only one ball for the whole
team. At Ajax my ball “Cruyff” was my friend and I had lots of affection for it”.

Cruyff also said, “I have noticed over recent years that professional players’ technical and
tactical skills have decreased. Players are faster, stronger but not as skilful. This worries me.
The problem is with coaching at grass roots level. The coaches want children to play like
professionals. This is a terrible mistake. Children should do nothing but play and play. Children
should play with total freedom and enjoyment without pressure or any shouting from the coach
That can turn every game into a case of life and death. I repeat: Children should play soccer for
enjoyment. If they play well, enjoy themselves and develop great skill, then victories will follow.
Sometimes teams manage to win by taking no risks and playing badly but in the long-term the
better team will come out on top. Anyway we should all strive to make sure this is the case”.

Important Quick Note: Set home dribbling and shooting practice as a daily fun endeavor.
Follow up to check on completion. Keep a log as to which players are getting their homework
done and recognize those who show the greatest responsibility in homework completion. Enlist
the parents of your players. A daily reminder from a responsible parent goes a long way
toward ensuring that the homework gets done!

“We develop opportunity by applying persistence to the possibilities. Opportunity is all around
us. If we seek it we will find it. And if the door of opportunity is closed, we must knock on it-and
keep on knocking until it opens.”

Author unknown
Chapter Ninety-Two

Two Great Ways to Maximize Homework Benefits

The right training aids can be amazing motivational and feedback tools for the budding soccer player.

Best Training Aid For Shooting
The first and possibly most important training aid that any can parent can provide their child is some type of soccer re-bounder. From all that I have read it appears that all of history’s great goal scorers grew up with access to a rebound surface and spent many hours honing their ability to strike the ball with accuracy and power. A house or local school with a brick wall and some open space to shoot may be the best option of all. However, failing that there are some very effective kick return devices available commercially. A simple search for soccer re-bounders or kickbacks using one of the reputable Internet search engines will turn up numerous viable options.

Cost
Purchase cost will be $200-400. Installation after delivery involves a total time commitment of one to two hours.

Benefits
- Immediate ball return results in maximum repetition and significant technical improvement.
- Motivation – The more shots a kid takes the more fun it is.
- Forces players to keep the ball low and accurate because any shot that goes high and wide has to be retrieved from behind the re-bounder.

Location
Any suitable open area where there is enough space to shoot with power from a distance. Be careful not to locate where an errant shot can cause damage.

Ancillary benefits
If you buy the right re-bounder the net will have a tight enough mesh that it can be used for other sports and family members. There is one re-bounder on the market that doubles as a baseball and golf training tool.

Best Training Tool For Learning Moves and Fakes
Another incredible training tool is a full body mirror in the area of the home that the player uses to practice the “Training Soccer Legends” moves. The simplest way to provide this tremendous
visual feedback option is to purchase sixteen or more 12 x 12 inch mirror tiles from your local home improvement store. Attach these to the wall of a garage or basement to create a 48" x 48" or larger mirrored area in front of which there is enough space to perform your fakes. The mirror provides an instant capability to review and refine fake and move technique while training the player to keep her head up and perform the move by touch and feel. This is the most effective and enjoyable way to enjoy instant visual feedback on technical performance. The other way is by video and replay, however this method involves a delay between the performance, visual feedback and correction, whereas the mirror option is instantaneous. The cost to benefit ratio of providing this mirror option is fantastic.

**Cost**
Purchase cost will be $40-50. Installation involves a total time commitment of one to three hours including buying and fitting the mirror tiles.

**Benefits**
- Instant visual feedback results in significant technical improvement.
- Motivation - What kid doesn't like looking in the mirror?
- Forces players to keep head up throughout the move in order to evaluate performance.

**Location**
On the wall of garage, basement or other suitable open area.

**Ancillary benefits**
Mirror can be used to make weight training, dance or aerobics more enjoyable for other family members.

**Thoughts to ponder**
From Sam Walton’s rules for building a business ("Made in America" 1991):
"Swim upstream. Go the other way. Ignore the conventional wisdom. If everybody else is doing it one way, there’s a good chance you can find your niche by going in exactly the opposite direction. But be prepared for a lot of folks to wave you down and tell you you’re headed the wrong way."

"You see things; and you say, why? But I dream things that never were; and I say, why not?"
George Bernard Shaw
Chapter Ninety-Three

Impact of Legends Style Training on the Pro’ Game

In the USA a succession of professional soccer league ventures have failed. The NASL, MISL and more recently WUSA, have declared insolvency and ceased operations, either permanently or for a while. Leagues of this nature are primarily dependent on income from attendance, plus TV and sponsor/advertising revenues, all of which are directly affected by whether the product on the field of play is entertaining.

In October 2003 the USA women played Italy in an exhibition game. This game was anything but great entertainment. It looked as though both teams had been told to not let the ball hit the ground, and/or to pass it long the moment they received it. You could count the fakes, moves and moments of great individual skill on one hand. It was a very boring game. Two trained seals and a beach ball, with a fish to the best juggler, would have been more exciting to watch.

This European and North American model of low risk, “keep it simple”, regimented play, need not be the way of the future. Players trained in the “Training Soccer Legends” style of play have the greatest potential to bring more excitement and entertainment to the college, professional and international game. Purists of the game may thrive on the proper execution of small details but the professional game, especially embryonic men’s and women's soccer leagues like the MLS and WUSA, need more than that. Programs looking to attract spectators and the income that comes with a strong base of fan support, need to promote exciting play and a high entertainment value to put more fans in the stands and attract greater corporate sponsorship.

One of the parents in our club recently overheard moms of other teams talking about a Legends U10 girl's team at a recent outdoor game. "Oh, is this a Legends team? I want to stay and watch them do their dribbling fakes and moves.” That’s the value of great entertainment!

Great players such as Pele, Maradona and Ronaldinho fill the stands. Therefore, even though there are many wonderful positive developmental values to be realized by developing players with the “Training Soccer Legends” approach, the ability to entertain may be the most commercially valuable because of its potential to trigger growth in fan support and spectator attendance.

In order to develop every player into a ball wizard capable of entertaining the crowd, coaches must continuously train the art of dribbling in practice and insist upon the use of deceptive dribbling in game situations. If they do their teams will excite the fans and instill fear into the opposition.

Love of the game and spectator attendance has never been a problem in countries where the soccer played is creative. The Brazilian game is so popular that the Maracana stadium in Rio has
the greatest capacity of any soccer stadium in the world. The Brazilian production line of incredible dribblers and goal scorers shows no sign of slowing down anytime soon and the world of soccer reaps the benefit. Many fans in England, Germany, Italy and Spain, where the world’s best professional leagues operate, often show up to watch their favorite Brazilians, or great dribbling superstars from other nations, turn on the creative magic. Many fans anticipate each match with eagerness because of the potential to witness an extraordinary play from one of these exceptional ball wizards.

Entertainment, excitement, unpredictability, creativity, magic, flair, improvisation, surprise and deception are all major components of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach. These qualities attract the fans and keep them coming back. They are also key factors in the great success that teams with players who possess these qualities enjoy at the highest levels of play. With a succession of great dribblers and finishers Brazil has established the world’s most envied international reputation. In European professional club football Real Madrid dominated the 50’s with Ferenc Puskas and DiStefano holding center stage. In the 60’s Manchester United benefited from the wizardry of George Best to win the European Cup, while Santos dominated the South American game with Pele. In the 70’s Cruyff led Holland, Ajax and Barcelona to glory. In the 80’s Maradona worked his magic for Argentina, Boca Juniors and Napoli. In the 90’s Giggs sparked Manchester United to their best ever decade and Zidane’s artistry brought France out of the shadows into World Cup dominance. In the new millennium three Brazilians, Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho have already stamped their mark on both the club and World Cup scene. These players are not just pretty to watch, they are also very effective at creating and scoring crucial goals to win key games and competitions.

Important Quick Note: The future of the professional and international game is in the hands of the youth coach. Demand and encourage the risks necessary for your players to develop excitement, unpredictability, creativity, magic, flair, improvisation, surprise and deception. In doing so you will perhaps be creating players who can win the big game and provide millions of spectators with the entertainment to turn them into lifelong fans of the “beautiful game”. Your youth teams may not win as many games but you could be a decisive factor in developing the next world superstar and a tremendously positive influence on future support for the world’s most popular team game.
Chapter Ninety-Four
Legends Academy Program Structure

The Legends Academy is the training program for our teams, other student players from outside clubs and unaffiliated high school players. Team practices are part of the Academy and only players in the Academy are usually asked to play on our teams in leagues. Players from the Legends Academy will always be given the first option on every team that we form to represent the Legends club. We may, on occasion, invite a player or two from outside the program to make up the numbers on a team so that Academy players get to play, however, those players will be asked to step down as soon as we have a player in the Academy to take their place. As coaches wishing to develop our players to higher levels than players on other teams it makes no sense for us to form teams from players who are not training with us. This is especially true because we have a unique style of play that demands attendance at our practices for any Legends style individual and team success to be achieved. We hold practices for multiple teams in every age group and separate “Individual Academy” sessions for all age groups. There are between 5 and 7 mid-week outdoor options for every player and 2 v 2 games every weekend. Players can choose between individual and team practices. Options include training with older or younger teams in addition to one’s own age group. There are always four age appropriate individual practice options in the weekly “Academy” schedule.

The KC Legends club has a policy of not playing players who do not practice with us. We may make exceptions where teams need outside players to make up the numbers, or where we know a player is planning to join us in the future. This is consistent with even the most recreational soccer programs where players have to commit to attend practice in order to play on a team. The Legends has a more flexible practice policy, with more options, than most other premier clubs, but we rarely field players who are not practicing with us in games. At the younger ages both team and individual practices are integral parts of the “Training Soccer Legends” system. Players are encouraged to attend both to enhance and optimize the developmental experience. The Legends Academy training and practice program is by far the most important part of the curriculum. This is because the number of ball touches and challenging tactical situations in games is a mere fraction of that enjoyed in practice and 2 v 2 scrimmages.

We do not cut players from the club while they remain committed to practice and prepare at home to the expected degree. This ensures that players always have a place on a Legends team just so long as they continue to prepare appropriately for games. During the official USYSA try-out phase of each soccer year there is an annual re-alignment to reflect player progress. This is where the players currently in the program, and the players who try-out, are evaluated and placed on the team that will maximize their development. During this process we will put the best potential group of players on one team, the next best group of players on another and so on, until all the players in the program who want to play for the Legends have a team to play on within the club. Although most players will stay with their current team, those players needing to be re-
positioned for their own development will go through that process during the tryout phase of the year. Placing all players appropriately at try-outs and not cutting players from the club is how we avoid two of the greatest problems:

- The stress of rejection at try-outs.
- Cuts from the club.

Legends players receive fair playing time at all games, (tournament or otherwise). During the earlier stages of development each team will switch the attack with the defense at the mid-point of every league season. As players get older they will be placed in positions suited to their strengths and team needs but will continue to be trained as creative dribblers and goal scorers in practice. Players who are signed up for just the Individual Academy can come and go as they please, on a monthly basis. However, players who play on our teams are asked to make a year round participation and financial commitment. In Kansas and Missouri this commitment is 9 months for high school players because the high school rules dictate that they can’t play club while playing high school soccer. This year round commitment is par for the course in most truly premier youth soccer clubs. Apart from the unshakeable developmental reasons outlined in this book there are two other very logical reasons for this:

- Firstly, the league and tournament expenses of the team have to be equally shared between all families on the team. If a number of families choose not to participate in a team event this not only leaves the team short of players but also shifts the financial burden on to the families still playing.
- Secondly, our coaching staff rely on the program fees to pay a significant part of their life bills i.e. mortgage, car etc. Just as with any other job there has to be consistent income expectancy, therefore, all truly respected premier soccer clubs with a long-term, committed coaching staff charge an ongoing coaching fee for each player in their program.

At some time during the year all families will choose to go on vacation and each player will miss practices and games. There are also times where a player may be sick or injured and unable to participate for a number of days or weeks. However, when this happens the coach still has to be at practice for the other members of the team. He is also able to give greater personal attention to those players who are fit and/or still in town. The advantage of the Legends system is that players can make sure they get the full worth from the program by taking advantage of our tremendous practice flexibility. They can make up practices before going away or after returning from vacation, injury or sickness. Because there are many week-day practice options and a weekend 2 v 2 small-sided session, incapacitated players, or those leaving town, can attend more than the normal three scheduled events per week for as long as it takes to make up for time missed. As a club our intent is to be more than fair to all players, parents, guardians and coaches involved. Our policies are more flexible and our coaches more committed than in most other premier programs. Greater individual development will always be the result of the “Training Soccer Legends” approach because we offer more practices, more small-sided games and a better coaching philosophy than traditional win oriented programs.
Chapter Ninety-Five

Young Players Benefit From High Level Competition

The prevailing philosophy is one of protectionism. We are told that players from U10 down should not play for a "National Championship", or even compete in local “premier” leagues because the pressure to win will be too great. Yet in many years of watching the U8, U9 & U10 divisions at the finals of the National Indoor Championships, I have yet to witness a negative developmental event that wasn’t caused by a misguided parent or coach. I have witnessed similar incidents of poor coaching and parenting just as often in recreational soccer, leading me to believe that any competitive experience, regardless of age or level, can be positive or negative depending on the attitude of the role models. It is the philosophy of the coach and parents that determines whether the experience is positive or negative for the kids. At all age levels the pursuit of the appropriate competitive game and practice standard is what counts. Many of soccer’s “authorities” advocate that players 10 and below do not play premier soccer and that all players should be rostered on the same recreational teams no matter what disparities exist in their level of athleticism or skill. Most recreational organizations unwittingly make their teams less fair and developmental by insisting that the ratios of weaker, average and stronger players on each team are equalized so that teams are evenly matched in league play. As a consequence of this policy they create a negative game day environment that de-motivates the weaker players and doesn’t challenge the stronger ones. They also promote a detrimental practice environment where the same ability inequities are repeated once or twice every week during the season. Unfortunately we have all witnessed instances where strong aggressive athletes completely dominate games and practices. Regretfully this imbalance occurs to a greater degree in the small-sided league games that are so rightly becoming the norm in youth soccer programs worldwide. There is something wrong with any developmental program that does not take into account individual developmental differences at every age. Soccer is not a classroom situation where kids of differing developmental abilities can all learn the same subject simultaneously with some success. In school no one attempts to take away your pencil while you are writing. The essential premise of soccer is competition. Someone is always attempting to steal the ball. This factor is further complicated by the tendency of the young player to be inherently selfish. While this selfishness can be a good thing because players need to learn to dominate the ball it can be a huge negative when competing players are mismatched.

Burn Out

Some coaches and administrators try to stamp on U6-U10 competition by citing instances of burnout. In my experience this most commonly occurs when a player is out of his depth, doesn’t enjoy situational reinforcement, can’t achieve success and therefore develops an inferiority complex. This is not a consequence of well-matched, high level, age appropriate competition. It is a most likely a consequence of forcing the stronger and weaker players to play against each other to no-ones benefit. This misguided approach increases the risk of lesser players developing a negative self-concept, destroys enjoyment and may result in burnout. One’s teammate on game
day will be one’s opponent in practice. Therefore, the argument that a good player will help bring the experience up to a higher plane for the weaker player holds little truth. In reality the weaker player cannot win the ball and gets dominated while the stronger player enjoys little viable growth because the weaker player offers him little challenge as a practice opponent and little help as a teammate in games. Fair competition at a challenging and equal practice and game level is ultimately the most desirable circumstance at every stage and age of play. This cannot be provided where kids of the same age, yet varying abilities and experience, are thrown together in the same developmental environment. Some children have phenomenal athletic genetics while others have little aptitude for sports. The children with little aptitude for sports would enjoy the experience to a far greater degree if not forced into a negative, no win competitive situation against the young studs of the age group who inevitably dominate them.

The “Training Soccer Legends” philosophy promotes effective ability breakdowns within practice and games. By using the “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum and round robin matrices it is always possible to structure smaller practice groups of more equal ability so that every player enjoys reinforcement and positive growth. Furthermore, the growing popularity of soccer and increasing enrollment numbers increase the chances of sub-dividing players by ability. This makes small-sided league games fairer and more rewarding at the younger ages. Additionally, when a child is 7-10 years of age, the pressure of playing as a novice in a National Championship final is relatively less stressful than when that same child plays as a novice at age 15. Younger players are short-term focused so they get better sleep the night before competing, fret less on the day of the competition, and will quickly focus on something else once the game is over. A child who has grown up competing at a high level from an early age will find it much easier to handle the big event pressure as a 15 year old. This is because he was exposed to the most stressful competitive level at an age when he was incapable of focusing too much on the pressure. Such players become used to perceiving the big event as an enjoyable and psychologically manageable part of soccer. Furthermore, a player needs to play at the highest level in order to learn how to belong at that level. Once the player has learned how to belong, he can excel at that level.

For these reasons the “Training Soccer Legends” approach advocates playing at the highest level of age and ability appropriate competition at all ages. This approach guarantees young players the most positive developmental experience. The most valid argument against young players competing in high level or national competition at a young age is the negative pressure to win. However, most teachers and coaches at the upper levels of youth soccer participation are enlightened enough to promote “doing your best” as opposed to winning. The poor youth coach who emphasizes winning over development at the younger ages is actually a rarity. Therefore, if young players are prevented from growing up with the enjoyment of well matched competition because of the few philistines who prize winning over intrinsic developmental benefits, we would be unfairly tarring the positive coaching majority with the stained brush of the misguided minority and denying young players the chance for maximum technical, tactical, physiological and psychological growth..
Chapter Ninety-Six

Attending Big Events Helps Develop Great Players

Each and every team needs strong coaching leadership at crucial junctures. As coaches we should be easy going when it doesn't matter but in when it really counts we should all fight like Pit Bull terriers to explain and rationalize what is in the best interests of the players. In the quest to create great players and strong adults out of the children we work with, we will contest many battles over the years. As Legends coaches we have adopted unconventional theories and asked players and parents to believe that our unique approach is in the very best interests of the kids. In the pursuit of the finest developmental benefits for the kids we must truly believe that our approach is both intelligent and defensible in debate of the highest order and spend as long as it takes to rationalize our position.

Some parents in our club believe that Legends teams shouldn't attend the big event until they are proficient at overcoming the pass and move, or long ball, game that other teams play. I would offer up an alternative viewpoint. I believe that teams developed with the “Training Soccer Legends” method should attend the big events to give Legends players the experience of learning to play their unique game against the very best pass and receive programs, and to give themselves a benchmark from which to gauge their future growth and development. The Legends focus is on creating players of great independence who can later dominate both the 1 v 1 and the incisive passing game. However, this involves first learning to dominate opponents in the 1 v 1 situation at the very highest level. The primary goal here is true independence from teammates. This will only happen if players can learn to go it alone at the highest levels of play involving the greatest psychological and physical pressure. Then, and only then, will our players be truly ready to come together as a team and truly inter-depend to form a "team of brilliance" instead of the more common team of mediocrity. Without the continued refinement and use of their 1 v 1 dribbling skills at the highest possible levels our players will not truly master those skills and will never develop to the point of mastery where they are able to make the "big play" under pressure at the very highest level, i.e. college showcase or similar. Unfortunately we have all witnessed many a misguided player and family abandon this philosophy and join another team that plays only in local or outdoor events. The net result has always been a significant diminution in both the individual skill and self-belief so vital to making the big play. Consequently those coaches, parents and players who choose to stay in their local comfort zones and reject the opportunity to face more beneficial and greater challenges, lose their opportunity to differentiate themselves from the pack and forsake the rewards that go with this experience.

The “Training Soccer Legends” approach focuses uniquely on the success of each player. It puts little emphasis on team wins and losses and great emphasis on individual wins. If a team doesn’t attend the biggest events numerous players who will enjoy tremendous motivational and developmental benefits from such an event, will have part of their hopes, motivations and growth
opportunities dashed. Should some parents desire a soccer experience without travel and/or a session off from soccer the great coach will remember that the less committed should never be allowed to dictate the opportunities for the more committed. Where one or two players refuse to support the team and refuse to attend a big event it inevitably results in a negative snowball syndrome where others question the viability of making the commitment without certain players who are perceived as essential to making the experience a positive and competitive one. The end result is that everyone loses and the less committed dictate the opportunities for the most committed. Good coaches in strong dedicated programs should strive to prevent this from happening!

When the coaching emphasis is on individual development not team wins, national championships and other prestigious events are tremendous experiences for players of all ages. Such events challenge our Legends trained players to step up and lead against accomplished traditionally coached players, who stretch and inspire them to exceed their previous level of highly skilled performance. Events of this level also help our players expand their motivation so that they are subsequently better prepared to use their individual skills, with confidence, to the maximum degree at the highest level, both outdoor and indoor. Attending the big event at their own level is the right thing for all players. For the doubters the history and accomplishments of the Kansas City Legends players who have followed the contrarian “Training Soccer Legends” curriculum should verify and reinforce this fact. One cannot hope to be the very best if one does not seek out the best opponents and learn from them.
Chapter Ninety-Seven

MISL Style Indoor Beats Winter Outdoor or Futsal

Because of the latitude at which we play, the National Indoor Championship is vital to the fulfillment of the Kansas City Legends club scheme of coaching and development. In the winter there is no better motivational goal at the more northerly latitudes than the National Indoor Championship. It has always been the one winter event that makes the most motivational sense for young players from colder climates. This is because players aiming for the national finals are more motivated to work towards improving their indoor game for many months leading up to the event and, in February and March when the finals are held, can perform at, or close to, their indoor peak and feel good about the experience. If Legends teams did not have the National Indoor Championship as a serious goal to shoot for, practice attendance and player dedication to working on skills at home during the winter would diminish severely. The primary objective for every youth player should be maximum individual development. Working towards the National Indoor Finals encourages players to prepare better for the big test. Just as a student is motivated to work significantly harder prior to a major exam, attending the National Indoor Finals provides the players with tremendous winter motivation to improve their skills and tactical speed prior to the big public examination against the nation’s best indoor teams. Furthermore, players and parents need bigger event reinforcement to reassure them they are treading the right path. Playing the National Indoor Championship Finals, State Cup, other prestigious competitions, gives Legends players and their parents the hard evidence that they have the best skills. This reinforcement is a very powerful motivator to further dedication and pursuit of excellence. Another major reason for playing in the National Indoor Finals, State Cup and other big events is the psychology of "big event" performance. As the old adage goes, "if you don't go you'll never belong and if you don't belong you'll never excel". Players need all the experience they can get at the highest level of competition in order to feel comfortable enough to use the most difficult moves and techniques under the greatest psychological and physical pressure. The nature of the "Training Soccer Legends" way of playing is much more difficult and demanding than the "safety first" regimented pass and receive game propounded by traditional coaches worldwide. Our players need to get used to playing in the big event so that they can feel confident playing the Legends game in the face of the greatest physical and psychological challenges. The National Indoor Championship has always provided the ultimate winter competitive cauldron in which our players have been able to temper the steel of their psyche and affirm their technical and tactical ability to compete with, and often dominate, some of the best players in the USA’s frozen north, where the only guaranteed viable competitive developmental option during the winter months is the MISL style indoor game. The remainder of the soccer year is spent pursuing the highest appropriate outdoor goal for each team, i.e. State Cup, Regional and National Championships.

It is in the indoor soccer environment that the tremendous skills of Legends players first reap great rewards. Due to the confined field space, consistent surface and environment, Legends trained players enjoy a greater degree of individual dribbling and goal scoring success indoors
than outdoors. Consequently, Legends trained teams are statistically more likely to beat opponents indoors than outdoors during the earlier years of their “Training Soccer Legends” experience. The individual and collective feelings of superiority first manifested in indoor soccer leads to a belief that the players and team can eventually dominate individual opponents and teams outdoors. However, without the indoor environment to create this higher positive self-awareness and confidence, the process of developing outdoor belief is delayed and in some players and teams may never occur.

Winter Outdoor versus Winter Indoor Soccer In Cold Climates
All Legends training methods and competitive situations are chosen with the goal of outdoor showcasing and attaining the higher levels of play in mind. Therefore, it would be logical to assume that playing outdoor whenever possible would maximize the ability of the individual and team to be successful. However, just as the 11 v 11 game isn’t the best developmental vehicle for learning how to play the 11 v 11 game, the outdoor league environment is not always the best way to learn to play the outdoor game. From Kansas City north to Des Moines and Omaha very little outdoor soccer is played during the winter because the weather is too bad for it to be a viable option. In the Twin cities of St Paul and Minneapolis, clubs can’t consider outdoor as a winter option because the fields remain snow covered for most of the cold weather months. In areas at similar latitudes to Kansas City, playing outdoor soccer as a replacement for playing indoor league and tournament soccer is a bad tactical coaching error. To protect against outdoor cancellations older youth teams should always play winter indoor soccer. Such teams could play winter outdoor soccer in addition to indoor soccer but should never gamble on outdoor as a replacement for indoor.

Some of the reasons for this are as follows:

- Winter outdoor soccer can be a developmental and motivational negative: Having enrolled Legends teams for outdoor winter leagues on many occasions, it has become clear that playing outdoor soccer during the winter is, at best, a learning lottery and, at worst, a developmental and motivational disaster. For a number of years Legends teams have attempted to play outdoor soccer during the winter. Unfortunately the winter weather made this policy a very frustrating and unpleasant one for players and parents alike. On the days that were nice enough for the players, the experience was often cold and miserable for those individuals on the bench and especially unpleasant for the parents who suffered patiently and, at times complained vociferously, on the sidelines through many a frigid game. In the winter even the better days can be fairly nasty for soccer spectators and bench players.

- Winter Outdoor is Less Fun: Winter outdoor soccer is not as enjoyable as indoor soccer. The players have less fun because:
  1. Outdoor is cold whereas indoor is warm.
  2. Indoor is conducive to pre-game and post-game interaction for both players and parents. By comparison winter outdoor is uncomfortable and anti-social.
3. Sloppier outdoor field conditions discourage foot skills. By comparison the indoor carpet encourages and motivates players to play the more enjoyable creative style so vital to the “Training Soccer Legends” approach.
4. Indoor is crowded, energetic and more exciting. Winter Outdoor is bleak and deserted.
5. Indoor gives everyone far greater opportunity to attack and score goals or get assists.

- Winter outdoor, with all the cancellations and re-schedules, is very hard on family agendas. With all the other things that today’s families have on their plate both the players and parents need to know the day and time of play at the beginning of every season. Winter outdoor soccer in more northerly latitudes makes this impossible because there are inevitably many adverse weather days resulting in cancellations and reschedules. Even when all weather surfaces are used, below acceptable temperature levels force the cancellation of many games. Unfortunately, in the average mid-west winter, half or more of scheduled games are cancelled due to adverse temperature, rain, snow, or field conditions. Rescheduled games pose a tremendous challenge for many busy parents who need set schedules for their family. Unfortunately, winter soccer in the north does not provide this much needed scheduling reliability therefore some players have to miss rescheduled outdoor games due to conflicts. Consequently, negative frustrations are built into the outdoor experience.

- Weekends without games: During the Winter there will always be a significant number of weekend days when it is not possible to play soccer. Any team that only registers to play outdoor soccer will suffer through numerous weekends without games due to adverse weather conditions. As a consequence parents and players may question the intelligence and commitment of the coach for placing them in this situation. This will undermine the coach/player/parent relationship and possibly kick start the process of looking for another team. Players need a game every week in order to remain enthused and to keep developing. They also need a weekly contest in order to be motivated to work on their skills at home every day. Furthermore, parents need to see their children enjoying the game and consistently improving their performance, in order to remain motivated to pay coaching fees and provide transport for their children. The negative potential of weekends without games is increased when a team follows an iffy winter club experience immediately with spring high school soccer. U15, 16, 17 & 18 girl’s teams who suffer a negative winter soccer experience will leave club soccer for high school in the early spring with a negative memory. The opportunities to turn these negative feelings around between the end of high school and try-outs in the early summer are few and far between. If the last major memory of club soccer is a negative one, players are more likely to quit the sport or move to another team during the summer tryout period.

- Game attendance: It is significantly harder to get 11 players to outdoor games during the winter. There have been numerous bleak winter days when our outdoor game attendance was at, or below, 11 players. When it is extremely cold outside it is less fun to play or watch outdoor soccer. As a consequence motivation and player attendance drops.
• Field conditions: For outdoor winter soccer the field surface is usually far worse than for outdoor soccer in other seasons. Even artificial surfaces are often damp and slippery, while natural grass fields can be very messy. This undermines performance of the extremely difficult neuromuscular skills we expect our players to use. As a consequence Legends trained players are less likely to take the risks so vital to great creative skill acquisition. Unfortunately ugly field conditions favor the kick-ball, or “quick release passing teams” and serve only to discourage the use of great skill at crucial junctures during development. Consequently, the winter outdoor game environment often serves to retard the very thing that the “Training Soccer Legends” program seeks to develop most, i.e. fantastic individual skill with the ball and the self-belief to use that ability.

**Futsal versus Indoor Soccer**

Where no MISL style indoor option exists Futsal is certainly more beneficial than not playing at all. However, being the consummate analyst I’ve done an Indoor Soccer versus Futsal study and, as a result, firmly believe that, when compared to indoor, the combination of a different ball, no walls, the hard surface and having to split an outdoor squad into two Futsal teams takes away from the development of a great field player, goalie and superb team.

The reasons for this are as follows:

• When dribbling and receiving, the low bounce Futsal ball does much of the work for the player because it doesn't explode away from clumsier touches like a regulation soccer ball. This lulls players into a false sense of security and allows them to get away with poor technique, so that when they return to playing with a regular ball, they exhibit bad habits that have to be broken before positive technical progress can resume.

• When shooting or passing, the low bounce Futsal ball stays artificially low. Consequently, upon returning to a real soccer ball, players are less able to use the correct technique and have to discard bad habits before progressing. This “two steps forward one step back” method delays the grooving of correct technique. In the world of Physical Education one of the key principles is specificity of training, i.e. making training as specific as possible to the real game. The only logical justification for ignoring the “Specificity of Training” approach is where the challenges attempted actually exceed the difficulty of those specifically posed by the real game. Because it is easier to keep the heavier Futsal ball low when shooting, players can be technically lazy yet still receive reward and reinforcement for poor technique. The Futsal ball disguises a tendency to "get under" a real ball and allows players to hide poor shooting technique until they use a real ball again. Players who have become familiar with striking a Futsal ball have to re-learn how to keep a normal soccer ball low when they return to the outdoor game. Consequently, they waste their winter learning opportunity in a process of partial self-deception. Believing they are getting better when in reality their technical skills are actually going backwards. There can be little benefit to learning real soccer ball techniques with a Futsal ball. This is an exercise in simple logic, however, to test the theory empirically I used a Futsal ball in practices. When my players used poor technique they were able to keep it closer in the dribble and lower in the shot than a normal ball.
Although this may seem like a minor point, developing a great player demands attention to even the tiniest detail. A hundred miniscule, yet positive, realistic and specific adaptations can make an absolutely massive difference in long-term development. Conversely, the bad habits acquired by using a Futsal ball can be very harmful.

- While “No Walls” may appear to be an advantage the opposite is actually the case. Maximum development will only occur while the ball is actually in play. By comparison with indoor soccer, Futsal wastes significantly more playing time because the ball leaves the field of play to a far greater degree. Furthermore, Futsal is played on a smaller field with a faster gym type surface than that of a traditional indoor field where the turf is designed to simulate real soccer field conditions. Therefore, the ball gets away from players and leaves the playing area far more often. Even with highly skilled players the ball spends much time out of play. Kick-ins are incredibly time consuming and restarting a Futsal game involves constant kick-ins that waste significant time and bear little resemblance to the ebb and flow of an outdoor game on a big field. This constant, “stop and go” restart game steals from the clock and takes away from ball touches and skill development for the players concerned. In indoor soccer players enjoy the maximum training benefit because the ball is always confined to the field by the boards and the game rarely comes to a full stop after an errant shot or pass. This results in significantly more “live” playing time and more development for all concerned.

- Splitting outdoor team rosters in half to play Futsal causes team dissent because no matter which way the players from a 14-18 player outdoor roster are separated into two five player Futsal teams, someone is always unhappy with the way those teams are divided. In Futsal, with the lower player numbers on the field, outdoor squads have to be divided in two to give everyone reasonable playing time. The extra players on the field in the indoor game allow the coach to avoid the squad splitting negative inherent in Futsal.

- Because indoor is the nation’s accepted elite professional and youth game, a better variety and cross-section of quality competition plays indoor soccer in most major cities. As a consequence, indoor soccer is more competitive, beneficial and developmental.

- Futsal promotes negative coaching tactics. In outdoor soccer and Futsal the tactic of kicking the ball out of play is used to interrupt the game, waste time and allow the defense to get numbers behind the ball. In indoor soccer the walls largely prevent the use of this negative tactic. The walls also provide a way to keep passes and kicks from less skilled teams in play thus providing greater ball time and development for all involved.

- The Indoor Game provides every North American youth team with an opportunity to play in a credible national/continental championship that is perfectly positioned at the end of the Winter Indoor calendar. This prestigious goal motivates players to keep working at their game throughout the winter and promotes constant improvement in the quest for national/international success. Futsal does not have a credible National Championship at the end of the winter to rival that of the indoor game, therefore young Futsal players do not enjoy the motivational benefit provided by pursuing the ultimate goal for the youth player, i.e. a national championship at the culmination of the winter season.

- Walls: The walls in indoor soccer not only keep the ball in play, resulting in more playing time, they also offer each player a skillful alternative when pressured by an opponent. A
quick pass off the wall around an opponent is one of the more intelligent and skillful plays of the indoor game. This option does not occur in Futsal where any player who doesn’t have the option of a pass to a teammate, and hasn't been trained extensively in the “Training Soccer Legends” fakes and moves, has to boot the ball up field or out of play, thereby giving away possession and reinforcing negative tactics and skills. This quote from the Dutch maestro Johan Cruyff reinforces this point: “During those (street) games I’d use stone walls, teammates and even the curbs of the pavement. My favorite move was to kick the ball against a wall and control the rebound whilst running at speed, as this split second was often the crucial difference between a great goal or loss of possession”.

- Fun: Kids enjoy the specifically designed indoor soccer arena with artificial turf far more than the multi-purpose sports hall or gym situation that Futsal is played in. Kids feel they are playing the real indoor game when they visit an indoor arena specifically designed for soccer and carpeted with indoor turf. Adults pay little attention to this factor but to a child it is often the component that makes the greatest difference.

- Goalkeeping: Young goalkeepers love the indoor game because the newer turf surfaces provide an excellent cushion for diving saves. By playing indoor soccer instead of Futsal the goalie avoids the bumps and bruises caused by going to ground on the harder surfaces typical of Futsal. For the goalkeeper to develop maximally any unnecessary psychological barriers with regard to diving and 1 v 1 saves must be removed. In indoor soccer it’s fun to dive around on the padded carpet, therefore goalkeeper skill acquisition in the crucial 1 v 1 or diving save occurs to a greater degree.

- Indoor is the only professional indoor game: The M.I.S.L. arena soccer game provides the only indoor North American professional example for the young player to emulate. Conversely, Futsal has no professional presence in the U.S. and Canada and therefore cannot be taken as seriously. Partially because of the example set by the M.I.S.L. young players feel that they are in a very artificial soccer environment when they visit a multi-sports facility to play Futsal, and in a “real” soccer environment when they visit an MISL style indoor soccer facility.

For all the above reasons the indoor game is a much better developmental and motivational vehicle that helps maintain outdoor team unity during the long North American winter.

**Important Quick Note:** It is easy to dismiss this comparative study between Indoor Soccer and Futsal as relatively unimportant in a young player’s developmental experience. However, the great coach realizes that the margin between success and failure is often paper thin and will leave no stone unturned, or opportunity neglected, in the quest for maximum development. If perhaps just one or two players can enjoy a better learning experience because their coach took the time to really think through the costs and benefits of playing traditional indoor soccer versus Futsal, or winter outdoor instead of winter indoor, then the hours spent analyzing the costs and benefits are worth it. Any extra opportunity to maximize a player’s potential is well worth the time and in depth study necessary to evaluate the pros and cons before making a logical and credible recommendation. As coaches it is our responsibility to examine the plus and minus factors of all soccer learning environments before making the appropriate recommendation.
Conclusion

The US National team program and youth soccer in America have a major problem. Our culture is one of focusing on statistical wins, passing and positioning at the earlier stages of development. This comes at the cost of developing individual brilliance. Winning should be an individual focus before it becomes a team focus. The ultimate win is individual creative development. All the youth accolades in the world will not compensate for a lack of comfort and deception on the ball when a player is trying out for a college, professional or national team. The problem revolves around inappropriate coach and parent expectations. Most coaches and parents believe that the statistical win is important. This attitude is the same as judging a child by the size of their bank account. It is not sensible for a fifteen year old to leave school to work in a fast food restaurant for minimum wage, when that same child could stay in school and use the extra time to study and develop abilities that, later in life, will pay dividends. Likewise it is simply not important for children to win the game at the expense of developing the skills and tactical speed that later on will enable them to compete at the highest level. Every youth coach that encourages a defender to kick the ball out of play when under pressure in their own half, has one main objective - to win the game. As author Peter McWilliams points out, “To avoid situations in which you might make mistakes may be the biggest mistake of all.” This and numerous other limiting or negative tactics are damaging to the players concerned because an opportunity to take a risk and learn how to escape from pressure is lost every time the expedient route is taken. Coaches and parents justify this and other instant gratification tactics, by pointing to their team’s win/loss record with pride. As a father of five and, over the years a coach of thousands, I have learned to care little about whether or not my team wins. Instead I choose to focus on the individual win for each of my players. Eventually, after a period of years, my teams win more games than those who have been consistently coached only to win. This is because it’s hard to lose when one’s team is comprised of excellent dribblers and goal scorers.

The words of Rick Pitino from his excellent book “Success Is A Choice” sum up what should be important in college coaching. These sentiments are considerably more valid when applied to youth coaching: “People are forever asking me if winning that national championship was the crowning point in my coaching career. I don’t have the words to tell you how much pride I felt in being a part of something that was so wonderful. So, of course, winning the title in 1996 was one of those truly magical moments both for myself, and my family. However, in all honesty it wasn’t any greater than the night of the NBA draft. I was working as an analyst for TNT, and there were four of my players getting drafted. I saw these young men who had worked so hard for me hugging their families. I saw how happy they were and how far they’d come from when they had first arrived as freshmen, full of the same doubts and anxieties about the future that all freshmen have when they enter college. That was the ultimate moment in my career. I got more true satisfaction that night than from anything I’ve ever done in basketball, because I knew that I had played a role in filling somebody’s cup with so much joy. Because what you eventually find out-when you’re looking only for your individual gratification-is that it’s short lived. But when you have a hand in someone else’s success, it’s that connection, that bond, that can last a lifetime.”
As a word of advice to all players and parents, look for the program that focuses on the creative
development of the individual and has the track record of individual success to prove it. Applaud
players for their willingness to take risks, and the coach for encouraging the players to step out of
their comfort zone at the risk of giving up the ball and losing the game. Remember, in youth
soccer the individual developmental win is worth much more than the team statistical win. There
is no reward without risk and many mistakes have to be made along the road to greatness. Look
to Brazil, the greatest soccer nation in the world, for your inspiration. Emulate their creativity
and desire to make the big play and, like the Brazilians, you will eventually enjoy an inordinate
amount of success and recognition for your exceptional talents. Work daily on dribbling and
shooting. Remember that you need great dribbling deception and touch to create space and set up
the great shot. Also remember that a shot is the most difficult pass so, if you work hard on your
shooting skills, your passing will also become excellent.

"As a coach, you should teach every player how to give themselves the best chance to succeed.
Teach them how to be great players. After all, it is about them, and not us."
Author unknown

This book is a product of many people's input and feedback. Many coaches have influenced my
thoughts more than they'll ever know. Many players have served as guinea pigs for this "new
body of knowledge". If you adopt the concepts and policies laid out in this book you may find
yourself on the cutting edge of what could eventually be a vast explosion of "new knowledge" on
the North American continent. I can only imagine the fall-out that will occur from this book
when it is published. There will be instant converts, coaches who are ambivalent and others who
are rabid opponents and vicious critics. These differing perspectives will reflect those
experienced by the Legends club for the last 16 years. As a proponent of what is right, correct
and different I hope you will welcome the inevitable tussles with misguided critics much as your
players will have to welcome their creative battles with aggressive opponents.

In the immortal words of Winston Churchill:
“Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before
you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to
the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the
climb.”

A Final Thought From Ralph Waldo Emerson
“To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;
to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate
beauty, to find the best in others; to leave the world a better place whether by a healthy child, a
garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because
you lived. This is to have succeeded.”

For further information on “Training Soccer Legends” opportunities i.e. camps, clinics, consultancy,
advice and franchises. Please contact Andy Barney at andy@kclegendssoccer.com or 913-636-4073
Appendix 1

1 v 1 Round Robin Dog Eat Dog Matrices

The 1 v 1 matrices match up every player in a group of any size, with every other player in the group, for one round of 1 v 1 play. It is up to the coach to determine the length of each round and the size of each group, based upon a number of factors, e.g. the ability levels of the players involved and the time available for playing the 1 v 1 competition. Any full-time goalkeepers in attendance will keep goal for the whole practice session and the matrix chosen by the coach at the start of practice will reflect the number of field players only. Where there are uneven numbers the player scheduled to play against the highest number in the matrix being used, i.e. the player scheduled against #8 in when using an 8 player round robin matrix for 7 players, will have a bye round. During that round the player with the bye can either go in goal or perform another task selected by the coach.

Where goalkeepers are needed from the players who are also playing 1 v 1 the coach will designate the two players with the symbols * and @ to go in goal for that round.

Two matrix formats for all round-robin combinations are provided for the coach. These formats are:

- Column Form
- Line Form

The coach should choose whichever format they find easiest and quickest to use in the practice situation.

Where the practice involves the use of the smaller matrices with limited player numbers, the coach will have to repeat the matrix twice to achieve a round robin of 10-14 rounds in duration.
1 v 1 Round Robin 5-6 Individuals

If goalkeepers are deemed necessary the players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal. 4 & 5 go in goal once. Others go in twice.

5-6 Individuals In Column Form – Note: with 5 players game against #6 is a bye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 2*</td>
<td>4 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 3</td>
<td>5 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 6@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 4</td>
<td>5 V 2</td>
<td>4 v 5*</td>
<td>3 V 2@</td>
<td>2 v 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 6</td>
<td>6 V 3*</td>
<td>2 v 6</td>
<td>6 V 4</td>
<td>3 v 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5-6 Individuals In Line Form - Note: with 5 players game against #6 is a bye

ROUND 1 – 1 V 2*, 3 V 4, 5 V 6
ROUND 2 – 4 V 1, 5 V 2, 6 V 3*
ROUND 3 – 1 V 3, 4 V 5*, 2 V 6
ROUND 4 – 5 V 1, 3 V 2@, 6 V 4
ROUND 5 – 1 V 6@, 2 V 4, 3 V 5

1 v 1 Round Robin 7-8 Individuals

If goalkeepers are deemed necessary the players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal. 2 & 8 go in goal once. Others go in twice.

7-8 Individuals In Column Form - Note: with 7 players game against #8 is a bye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 2*</td>
<td>3 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 4</td>
<td>7 V 1</td>
<td>5 V 1@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 4</td>
<td>4 V 2</td>
<td>2 v 5</td>
<td>6 V 4*</td>
<td>2 V 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 6</td>
<td>7 V 5*</td>
<td>6 v 7</td>
<td>5 V 3</td>
<td>7 V 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 v 8</td>
<td>8 V 6</td>
<td>3 v 8*</td>
<td>8 V 2</td>
<td>8 V 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ROUND 6 | ROUND 7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 6</td>
<td>1 v 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 v 7@</td>
<td>2 v 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 2</td>
<td>6 V 3@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 8</td>
<td>4 v 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7-8 Individuals In Line Form - Note: with 7 players game against #8 is a bye

ROUND 1 – 1 V 2*, 3 V 4, 5 V 6, 7 V 8
ROUND 2 – 3 V 1, 4 V 2, 7 V 5*, 8 V 6
ROUND 3 – 1 V 4, 2 V 5, 6 V 7, 3 V 8*
ROUND 4 – 7 V 1, 6 V 4*, 5 V 3, 8 V 2
ROUND 5 – 5 V 1@, 2 V 6, 7 V 3, 8 V 4
ROUND 6 – 1 V 6, 4 V 7@, 3 V 2, 5 V 8
ROUND 7 – 1 V 8, 2 V 7, 6 V 3@, 4 V 5
**1 v 1 Round Robin 9-10 Individuals**

If goalkeepers are deemed necessary the players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal.
10 & 7 go in goal once. Others go in twice

**9-10 Individuals In Column Form** - Note: with 9 players game against #10 is a bye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 2*</td>
<td>3 v 1</td>
<td>1 v 6</td>
<td>5 v 1</td>
<td>1 v 4@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 4</td>
<td>4 v 2</td>
<td>2 v 7</td>
<td>6 V 2@</td>
<td>2 v 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 6</td>
<td>7 V 5*</td>
<td>3 v 9@</td>
<td>9 V 7</td>
<td>3 v 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 v 8</td>
<td>9 V 6</td>
<td>4 v 8</td>
<td>8 V 3</td>
<td>8 v 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 v 10</td>
<td>10 v 8</td>
<td>5 v 10</td>
<td>10 V 4</td>
<td>7 v 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**9-10 Individuals In Line Form** - Note: with 9 players game against #10 is a bye

**ROUND 1** - 1 V 2*, 3 V 4, 5 V 6, 7 V 8, 9 V 10
**ROUND 2** - 3 V 1, 4 V 2, 7 V 5*, 9 V 6, 10 V 8
**ROUND 3** - 1 V 6, 2 V 7, 3 V 9@, 4 V 8, 5 V 10
**ROUND 4** - 5 V 1, 6 V 2@, 9 V 7, 8 V 3, 10 V 4
**ROUND 5** - 1 V 4@, 2 V 5, 3 V 6, 8 V 9, 7 V 10
**ROUND 6** - 9 V 1, 8 V 5@, 7 V 3, 6 V 4, 10 V 2
**ROUND 7** - 1 V 8, 2 V 9, 6 V 7, 4 V 5, 3 V 10*
**ROUND 8** - 7 V 1, 8 V 2, 5 V 3, 9 V 4*, 10 V 6
**ROUND 9** - 6 V 8*, 2 V 3, 4 V 7, 5 V 9, 1 V 10
**1 v 1 Round Robin 11-12 Individuals**

If goalkeepers are deemed necessary the players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal. 6 & 7 go in goal once. Others go in twice.

**11-12 Individuals In Column Form** - Note: with 11 players game against #12 is a bye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 2*</td>
<td>3 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 4</td>
<td>8 V 1</td>
<td>11 V 1</td>
<td>6 v 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 4</td>
<td>4 V 2</td>
<td>2 v 3</td>
<td>7 V 2</td>
<td>10 V 2</td>
<td>2 v 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 6</td>
<td>7 V 5*</td>
<td>5 v 8</td>
<td>10 V 3*</td>
<td>5 V 3</td>
<td>3 v 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 v 8</td>
<td>8 V 6</td>
<td>6 v 7</td>
<td>9 V 4</td>
<td>6 V 4*</td>
<td>4 v 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 v 10</td>
<td>11 V 9</td>
<td>10 v 11</td>
<td>11 V 6</td>
<td>9 V 7</td>
<td>5 v 9@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 v 12</td>
<td>12 V 10</td>
<td>9 v 12*</td>
<td>12 V 5</td>
<td>8 V 12</td>
<td>1 v 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 7</th>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>ROUND 9</th>
<th>ROUND 10</th>
<th>ROUND 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 5</td>
<td>6 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 7</td>
<td>10 V 8</td>
<td>1 V 10@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 v 8@</td>
<td>9 V 2</td>
<td>11 v 8*</td>
<td>6 V 2</td>
<td>8 V 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 11</td>
<td>8 V 3</td>
<td>3 v 9</td>
<td>9 V 1</td>
<td>3 V 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 v 9</td>
<td>11 V 4@</td>
<td>4 v 10</td>
<td>5 V 4</td>
<td>4 V 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 v 10</td>
<td>10 V 5</td>
<td>2 V 5</td>
<td>7 V 11</td>
<td>5 V 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 v 12</td>
<td>12 V 7</td>
<td>12 v 6</td>
<td>12 V 3@</td>
<td>2 V 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**11-12 Individuals In Line Form** - Note: with 11 players game against #12 is a bye

ROUND 1 – 1 V 2*, 3 V 4, 5 V 6, 7 V 8, 9 V 10, 11 V 12
ROUND 2 – 3 V 1, 4 V 2, 7 V 5*, 8 V 6, 11 V 9, 12 V 10
ROUND 3 – 1 V 4, 2 V 3, 5 V 8, 6 V 7, 10 V 11, 9 V 12*
ROUND 4 – 8 V 1, 7 V 2, 10 V 3*, 9 V 4, 11 V 6, 12 V 5
ROUND 5 – 11 V 1, 10 V 2, 5 V 3, 6 V 4*, 9 V 7, 12 V 8
ROUND 6 – 6 V 10, 2 V 11, 3 V 7, 4 V 8, 5 V 9@, 1 V 12
ROUND 7 – 1 V 5, 2 V 8@, 3 V 11, 6 V 9, 7 V 10, 4 V 12
ROUND 8 – 6 V 1, 9 V 2, 8 V 3, 11 V 4@, 10 V 5, 12 V 7
ROUND 9 – 1 V 7, 11 V 8*, 3 V 9, 4 V 10, 2 V 5, 12 V 6
ROUND 10 – 10 V 8, 6 V 2, 9 V 1, 5 V 4, 11 V 7, 12 V 3@
ROUND 11 – 1 V 10@, 8 V 9, 3 V 6, 4 V 7, 5 V 11, 2 V 12
**1 v 1 Round Robin 13-14 individuals**

If goalkeepers are deemed necessary the players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal. 12 & 13 go in goal once. Others go in twice.

**13-14 individuals In Column Form** - Note: with 13 players game against #14 is a bye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 2*</td>
<td>3 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 4</td>
<td>5 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 4</td>
<td>4 V 2</td>
<td>2 v 3</td>
<td>6 V 2</td>
<td>2 v 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 6</td>
<td>7 V 5*</td>
<td>5 v 8</td>
<td>7 V 3</td>
<td>3 v 8*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 v 8</td>
<td>8 V 6</td>
<td>6 v 7</td>
<td>8 V 4</td>
<td>4 v 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 v 10</td>
<td>11 V 9</td>
<td>9 v 13*</td>
<td>13 v 12</td>
<td>9 v 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 v 12</td>
<td>13 V 10</td>
<td>12 v 10</td>
<td>11 V 10*</td>
<td>13 v 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 v 14</td>
<td>14 V 12</td>
<td>11 v 14</td>
<td>14 V 9</td>
<td>10 v 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
<th>ROUND 7</th>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>ROUND 9</th>
<th>ROUND 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 V 11</td>
<td>10 V 1</td>
<td>12 V 1</td>
<td>1 v 11</td>
<td>1 v 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 V 2</td>
<td>9 V 2</td>
<td>13 V 2</td>
<td>10 v 8@</td>
<td>2 v 5@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 V 3</td>
<td>5 V 3</td>
<td>7 v 4@</td>
<td>3 v 13</td>
<td>3 v 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 V 4</td>
<td>11 V 4</td>
<td>11 V 8</td>
<td>4 v 6</td>
<td>4 v 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 V 5</td>
<td>6 V 12*</td>
<td>9 V 5</td>
<td>5 v 12</td>
<td>6 v 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 V 13</td>
<td>13 V 7</td>
<td>10 V 6</td>
<td>7 v 9</td>
<td>12 v 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 V 1@</td>
<td>8 V 14</td>
<td>14 V 3</td>
<td>2 v 14</td>
<td>7 v 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 11</th>
<th>ROUND 12</th>
<th>ROUND 13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 V 7</td>
<td>6 V 9@</td>
<td>1 V 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 V 10</td>
<td>3 V 10</td>
<td>2 V 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 V 3@</td>
<td>1 V 8</td>
<td>3 V 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 V 12</td>
<td>4 V 13</td>
<td>7 V 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 V 13</td>
<td>12 V 7</td>
<td>11 V 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 V 9</td>
<td>2 V 11</td>
<td>8 V 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 V 6</td>
<td>5 V 14</td>
<td>14 V 4*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**13-14 individuals In Line Form**

Note: with 13 players game against #14 is a bye

**ROUND 1** – 1 v 2*, 3 v 4, 5 v 6, 7 v 8, 9 v 10, 11 v 12, 13 v 14

**ROUND 2** – 3 V 1, 4 V 2, 7 V 5, 8 V 6, 11 V 9, 13 V 10, 14 V 12

**ROUND 3** – 1 v 4, 2 v 3, 5 v 8, 6 v 7, 9 v 13*, 12 v 10, 11 v 14

**ROUND 4** – 5 V 1, 6 V 2, 7 V 3, 8 V 4, 13 V 12, 11 V 10*, 14 V 9

**ROUND 5** – 1 v 6, 2 v 7, 3 v 8*, 4 v 5, 9 v 12, 13 v 11, 10 v 14

**ROUND 6** – 7 v 11, 8 V 2, 12 V 3, 9 V 4, 10 V 5, 6 v 13, 14 V 1@

**ROUND 7** – 10 V 1, 9 V 2, 5 V 3, 11 V 4, 6 v 12*, 13 V 7, 8 V 14

**ROUND 8** – 12 V 1, 13 V 2, 7 V 4@, 11 V 8, 9 V 5, 10 V 6, 14 V 3

**ROUND 9** – 1 v 11, 10 v 8@, 3 v 13, 4 v 6, 5 v 12, 7 v 9, 2 v 14

**ROUND 10** – 1 v 13, 2 v 5@, 3 v 9, 4 v 10, 6 v 11, 12 v 8, 7 v 14

**ROUND 11** – 1 v 7, 2 v 10, 11 V 3@, 4 v 12, 5 v 13, 8 v 9, 14 V 6

**ROUND 12** – 6 V 9@, 3 v 10, 1 v 8, 4 V 13, 12 v 7, 2 V 11, 5 v 14

**ROUND 13** – 1 v 9, 2 v 12, 3 v 6, 7 v 10, 11 v 5, 8 v 13, 14 v 4*
1 v 1 Round Robin 15-16 Individuals

Players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal. 3 and 13 go in goal once. Others go in twice.

15-16 Individuals In Column Form - Note: with 15 players game against #16 is a bye

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 v 2*</td>
<td>4 V 1</td>
<td>1 V 6</td>
<td>1 v 7</td>
<td>8 V 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 v 4</td>
<td>3 V 2</td>
<td>2 V 5</td>
<td>2 v 14</td>
<td>15 V 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 v 6</td>
<td>8 V 5*</td>
<td>3 V 8</td>
<td>13 v 3</td>
<td>14 V 3*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 v 8</td>
<td>7 V 6</td>
<td>4 V 7</td>
<td>4 v 9</td>
<td>13 V 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 v 10</td>
<td>12 V 9</td>
<td>9 V 14</td>
<td>5 v 11</td>
<td>12 V 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 v 11</td>
<td>11 V 10</td>
<td>10 V 13</td>
<td>6 v 12*</td>
<td>11 V 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 v 14</td>
<td>15 V 14</td>
<td>12 V 15</td>
<td>8 v 15</td>
<td>10 V 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 v 15</td>
<td>16 V 13</td>
<td>16 V 11*</td>
<td>10 v 16</td>
<td>16 V 9</td>
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<td>ROUND 8</td>
<td>ROUND 9</td>
<td>ROUND 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 v 5</td>
<td>1 v 11</td>
<td>5 V 1@</td>
<td>1 v 9</td>
<td>3 V 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2 v 10@</td>
<td>7 V 3</td>
<td>2 v 12</td>
<td>7 V 5</td>
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<td>9 v 7*</td>
<td>3 v 9</td>
<td>9 V 13</td>
<td>3 v 10</td>
<td>11 V 9</td>
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<td>4 v 15</td>
<td>15 V 11</td>
<td>4 v 11@</td>
<td>15 V 13*</td>
</tr>
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<td>5 v 13</td>
<td>6 V 2</td>
<td>5 v 14</td>
<td>6 V 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8 V 4</td>
<td>6 v 15</td>
<td>10 V 8</td>
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<td>10 V 14</td>
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<td>15 v 5</td>
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<td>2 v 8</td>
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<td>13 v 2</td>
<td>14 v 1</td>
<td>4 v 10*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12 V 7@</td>
<td>12 v 3</td>
<td>13 v 6</td>
<td>5 v 9</td>
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<td>7 v 15</td>
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<td>4 v 5</td>
<td>10 V 6</td>
<td>10 v 1</td>
<td>10 v 5</td>
<td>11 v 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 v 12</td>
<td>11 V 2</td>
<td>9 v 6</td>
<td>15 v 9@</td>
<td>12 v 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 V 16@</td>
<td>5 V 16</td>
<td>4 v 16</td>
<td>16 V 3</td>
<td>1 v 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15-16 Individuals In Line Form

Note: with 15 players game against #16 is a bye

ROUND 1 – 1 V 2*, 3 V 4, 5 V 6, 7 V 8, 8 V 10, 12 V 11, 13 V 14, 15 V 16
ROUND 2 – 4 V 1, 3 V 2, 8 V 5*, 7 V 6, 12 V 9, 11 V 10, 15 V 14, 16 V 13
ROUND 3 – 1 V 6, 2 V 5, 3 V 8, 4 V 7, 9 V 14, 10 V 13, 12 V 15, 16 V 11*
ROUND 4 – 1 V 7, 2 V 14, 13 V 3, 4 V 9, 5 V 11, 6 V 12*, 8 V 15, 10 V 16
ROUND 5 – 8 V 1, 15 V 2, 14 V 3*, 13 V 4, 12 V 5, 11 V 6, 10 V 7, 16 V 9
ROUND 6 – 3 V 5, 2 V 4, 9 V 7*, 6 V 8, 13 V 11, 10 V 12, 1 V 15, 14 V 16
ROUND 7 – 1 V 11, 2 V 10@, 3 V 9, 4 V 15, 5 V 13, 6 V 14, 8 V 12, 7 V 16
ROUND 8 – 5 V 1@, 7 V 3, 9 V 13, 15 V 11, 6 V 2, 8 V 4, 10 V 14, 16 V 12
ROUND 9 – 1 V 9, 2 V 12, 3 V 10, 4 V 11@, 5 V 14, 6 V 15, 7 V 13, 8 V 16
ROUND 10 – 3 V 1, 7 V 5, 11 V 9, 15 V 13*, 6 V 4, 10 V 8, 14 V 12, 16 V 2
ROUND 11 – 15 V 10, 14 V 7, 8 V 13, 11 V 3, 9 V 2, 4 V 5, 1 V 12, 6 V 16@
ROUND 12 – 15 V 3, 14 V 4, 13 V 1, 12 V 7@, 9 V 8, 10 V 6, 11 V 2, 5 V 16
ROUND 13 – 15 V 5, 14 V 8@, 13 V 2, 12 V 3, 11 V 7, 10 V 1, 9 V 6, 4 V 16
ROUND 14 – 12 V 4, 2 V 7, 14 V 1, 13 V 6, 11 V 8, 10 V 5, 15 V 9@, 16 V 3
ROUND 15 – 2 V 8, 3 V 6, 4 V 10*, 5 V 9, 7 V 15, 11 V 14, 12 V 13, 1 V 16
1 v 1 Round Robin 17-18 Individuals

The players denoted by * & @ in each round go in goal. 5 & 17 go in goal once, others twice

17-18 Individuals In Column Form - Note: with 17 players game against #18 is a bye

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<td>15 v 10</td>
<td>12 V 15</td>
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17-18 Individuals In Line Form

Note: with 17 players game against #18 is a bye

ROUND 1 - 1 V 2@, 3 V 4, 5 V 6, 7 V 8, 9 v 10, 11 V 12, 13 V 14, 15 V 16, 17 v 18

ROUND 2 - 1 V 3, 2 V 4, 5 V 7@, 6 V 8, 9 V 11, 10 V 12, 13 V 15, 14 V 17, 16 V 18

ROUND 3 - 1 V 4, 2 V 3, 5 V 8, 6 V 7, 9 V 12@, 10 V 11, 16 V 13, 14 V 18, 15 V 17

ROUND 4 - 14 V 1, 13 v 2, 16 v 3, 15 v 4@, 18 v 5, 6 V 10, 7 V 11, 8 V 12, 17 v 9

ROUND 5 - 1 V 6, 2 V 5, 3 V 8, 4 V 7, 9 V 14, 10 V 13, 11 V 16@, 12 V 17, 15 V 18

ROUND 6 - 1 V 7, 2 V 8, 3 V 5, 4 V 6, 9 V 15, 16 v 10, 11 V 17, 12 V 14, 18 V 13@

ROUND 7 - 1 V 9, 2 V 7, 3 V 6@, 4 V 5, 9 V 16, 10 V 17, 11 V 18, 12 V 13, 14 V 15

ROUND 8 - 1 V 9, 2 V 10, 3 V 11, 4 V 12, 5 V 13, 6 V 15, 7 V 17, 8 V 18, 14 V 16*

ROUND 9 - 10 V 1*, 2 V 9, 3 V 12, 4 V 11, 5 V 14, 6 V 16, 7 V 18, 8 V 15, 13 V 17

ROUND 10 - 11 V 1, 12 v 2, 3 V 9, 4 V 13, 5 V 15, 6 V 14, 16 v 7, 17 v 8@, 18 V 10

ROUND 11 - 12 V 1, 11 v 2*, 10 v 3, 4 v 14, 5 V 16, 6 V 17, 15 v 7, 8 V 13, 18 v 9

ROUND 12 - 13 V 1, 14 v 2, 15 v 3*, 9 v 4, 5 V 17, 18 v 6, 7 V 10, 8 V 11, 12 V 16

ROUND 13 - 1 V 5, 2 V 6, 3 V 7, 4 V 8, 9 V 13, 10 V 14@, 11 V 15, 12 V 18, 17 V 16

ROUND 14 - 15 V 1, 16 v 2, 17 v 3, 18 v 4*, 9 v 5, 6 V 12, 7 V 13, 8 V 10, 14 V 11

ROUND 15 - 16 V 1, 15 v 2, 18 v 3, 17 v 4, 10 v 5, 6 V 9, 7 V 12*, 8 V 14, 13 V 11

ROUND 16 - 17 V 1, 18 v 2, 13 v 3, 16 v 4, 12 v 5, 11 v 6, 7 V 14, 8 V 9*, 15 v 10

ROUND 17 - 18 V 1, 17 V 2, 14 V 3, 10 v 4, 11 v 5, 13 v 6*, 7 V 9, 8 V 16, 12 V 15
Appendix 2

Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrices

Each 2 v 2 matrix matches up players so that they have a different teammate and different player to mark for every 2 v 2 round of the competition. For this to occur, the first listed player from one team has to match up with the first listed player from the opposition, and the second listed player from one team has to match up with the second listed player from the opposition. It is up to the coach to determine the length of each round and the size of each group based upon a number of factors, e.g. the ability levels of the players involved and the total practice time available for playing 2 v 2. Please note; GK denotes part-time goalkeeper. Any full-time goalkeepers in attendance will keep goal for the whole practice session and the matrix chosen by the coach at the start of practice will reflect the number of field players only. When using the 8, 10, 12, 14 & 16 player 2 v 2 matrices, the coach should match up players of equal abilities as suggested so that the competition is fairer and more balanced.

Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 4, 5 or 6 Players

4 Players In Line or Column Form

ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | ROUND 3 | ROUND 4 | ROUND 5 | ROUND 6
---|---|---|---|---|---

5 Players In Line or Column Form

ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | ROUND 3 | ROUND 4 | ROUND 5 | ROUND 6
---|---|---|---|---|---
1/3 V 4/2 | 5/2 V 3/4 | 1/4 V 5/3 | 5/1 V 4/2 | 1/2 V 4/5 | 1/5 V 3/2
5 GK | 1 GK | 2 GK | 3 GK | 3 GK | 4 GK

6 Players In Column Form

ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | ROUND 3 | ROUND 4 | ROUND 5 | ROUND 6
---|---|---|---|---|---
1/2 V 3/4 | 2/3 V 5/6 | 4/5 V 1/6 | 1/3 V 2/4 | 4/6 V 5/1 | 2/5 V 6/3

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

5 V 6 | 1 V 4 | 2 V 3 | 6 V 5 | 3 V 2 | 4 V 1

6 Players In Line Form

ROUND 1 | ROUND 2 | ROUND 3 | ROUND 4 | ROUND 5 | ROUND 6
---|---|---|---|---|---
1/2 V 3/4 | 2/3 V 5/6 | 4/5 V 1/6 | 1/3 V 2/4 | 4/6 V 5/1 | 2/5 V 6/3

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

2 V 3 | 1 V 4
Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 7 Players

7 Players In Column Form

ROUND 1  ROUND 2  ROUND 3  ROUND 4  ROUND 5  ROUND 6
7/2 V 3/4  4/7 V 1/6  1/3 V 7/5  4/6 V 5/1  5/2 V 6/7  1/2 V 5/3

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:
5 V 1  2 V 3  4 V 6  7 V 2  4 V 3  5 V 6
Out or GK 6  5  2  3  1  4

ROUND 7  ROUND 8  ROUND 9  ROUND 10
4/2 V 7/1  1/4 V 3/6  3/7 V 4/5  5/6 V 2/3

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:
5 V 3  2 V 5  1 V 6  4 V 7
Out or GK 6  7  2  1

Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 8 Players

When matching up names and numbers please make sure that players 1 & 6, 2 & 5, 3 & 7, 4 & 8 are of equal ability because these players will be involved in every round either with, immediately against or on competing teams.

8 Players In Column Form

ROUND 1  ROUND 2  ROUND 3  ROUND 4  ROUND 5  ROUND 6  ROUND 7
1/5 V 2/6  1/7 V 3/6  1/8 V 4/6  1/6 V 5/2  1/3 V 7/6  1/4 V 8/6  1/2 V 6/5

OR

8 Players In Line Form

ROUND 1  ROUND 2  ROUND 3  ROUND 4  ROUND 5  ROUND 6  ROUND 7
1/5 V 2/6  3/7 V 8/4
ROUND 2  1/7 V 3/6  2/8 V 4/5
ROUND 3  1/8 V 4/6  3/5 V 2/7
ROUND 4  1/6 V 5/2  3/4 V 7/8
ROUND 5  1/3 V 7/6  2/4 V 8/5
ROUND 6  1/4 V 8/6  3/2 V 5/7
ROUND 7  1/2 V 6/5  3/8 V 4/7
Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 9 Players

9 Players In Column Form

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<th>ROUND 4</th>
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<th>ROUND 6</th>
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<td>Out</td>
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9 Players In Line Form

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Out or GK

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<td>3</td>
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Out or GK
**Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 10 Players**

When matching up names and numbers please make sure that players 1 & 6, 2 & 7, 3 & 8, 4 & 9, 5 & 10 are of equal ability because these players will be involved in every round either with, immediately against or on competing teams.

### 10 Players In Column Form

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### OR

### 10 Players In Line Form

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Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

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OR
Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 11 Players

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Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

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Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

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11 Players In Line Form

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/3 V 8/7</td>
<td>4/5 V 10/9</td>
<td>1 V 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9 v 3/10</td>
<td>2/7 V 4/11</td>
<td>5 V 8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 V 4/8</td>
<td>3/7 V 10/6</td>
<td>5 V 11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/5 V 8/11</td>
<td>6/1 V 9/2</td>
<td>4 V 10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 V 8/7</td>
<td>4/5 V 9/10</td>
<td>3 V 6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 12 Players**

When matching up names and numbers please make sure that players 1 & 7, 2 & 8, 3 & 9, 4 & 10, 5 & 11, 6 & 12 are of equal ability because these players will be involved in every round either with, immediately against or on competing teams.

**12 Players In Column Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/7 V 2/8</td>
<td>1/8 V 7/2</td>
<td>1/10 V 4/7</td>
<td>1/4 V 10/7</td>
<td>1/9 V 3/7</td>
<td>1/3 V 9/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 7</th>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>ROUND 9</th>
<th>ROUND 10</th>
<th>ROUND 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/11 V 5/7</td>
<td>1/5 V 11/7</td>
<td>1/12 V 6/7</td>
<td>1/6 V 12/7</td>
<td>1/2 V 8/7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OR**

**12 Players In Line Form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/7 V 2/8</td>
<td>1/8 V 7/2</td>
<td>3/10 V 9/4</td>
<td>5/12 V 11/6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10 V 4/7</td>
<td>2/12 V 6/8</td>
<td>3/11 V 5/9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 V 10/7</td>
<td>2/6 V 12/8</td>
<td>3/5 V 11/9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/9 V 3/7</td>
<td>2/11 V 5/8</td>
<td>6/10 V 4/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3 V 9/7</td>
<td>2/5 V 11/8</td>
<td>6/4 V 10/12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/11 V 5/7</td>
<td>2/10 V 4/8</td>
<td>3/12 V 6/9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5 V 11/7</td>
<td>2/4 V 10/8</td>
<td>3/6 V 12/9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/12 V 6/7</td>
<td>2/9 V 3/8</td>
<td>4/11 V 5/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6 V 12/7</td>
<td>2/3 V 9/8</td>
<td>4/5 V 11/10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 V 8/7</td>
<td>3/4 V 10/9</td>
<td>5/6 V 12/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 13 Players**

The coach will need to divide the players as follows. Put the best 6 in group A and the next 7 in group B or vice-versa.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Crossover</th>
<th>Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/2 V 3/4</td>
<td>7/2 V 3/4</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2/3 V 5/6</td>
<td>4/7 V 1/6</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4/5 V 1/6</td>
<td>1/3 V 7/5</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/3 V 2/4</td>
<td>4/6 V 5/1</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4/6 V 5/1</td>
<td>5/2 V 6/7</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2/5 V 6/3</td>
<td>1/2 V 5/3</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1/4 V 5/6</td>
<td>4/2 V 7/1</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5/3 V 6/2</td>
<td>1/4 V 3/6</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1/2 V 4/3</td>
<td>3/7 V 4/5</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/3 V 6/5</td>
<td>5/6 V 2/3</td>
<td>GRP A V GRP B</td>
<td>GRP B 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 14 Players**

When matching up names and numbers please make sure that players 1 & 9, 2 & 10, 3 & 11, 4 & 12, 5 & 13, 6 & 14, 7 & 8 are of equal ability because these players will be involved in every round either with, immediately against or on competing teams.

### 14 Players In Column Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 V 8</th>
<th>5 v 6</th>
<th>13 V 14</th>
<th>4 V 3</th>
<th>11 V 12</th>
<th>1 V 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 7</th>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>ROUND 9</th>
<th>ROUND 10</th>
<th>ROUND 11</th>
<th>ROUND 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/7 V 8/10</td>
<td>1/10 V 9/2</td>
<td>1/12 V 4/9</td>
<td>1/14 V 6/9</td>
<td>1/6 V 14/9</td>
<td>1/4 V 12/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5 V 13/12</td>
<td>5/14 V 13/6</td>
<td>7/14 V 13/8</td>
<td>7/12 V 11/8</td>
<td>3/8 V 7/4</td>
<td>5/8 V 7/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 V 9</th>
<th>7 V 8</th>
<th>6 V 5</th>
<th>3 V 4</th>
<th>12 V 11</th>
<th>13 V 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 13</th>
<th>ROUND 14</th>
<th>ROUND 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/10 V 9/8</td>
<td>1/8 V 7/2</td>
<td>1/2 V 10/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/14 V 6/12</td>
<td>4/6 V 14/12</td>
<td>5/6 V 14/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 V 2</th>
<th>9 V 10</th>
<th>7 V 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 14 Players In Line Form

#### 1 V 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 V 8</th>
<th>5 v 6</th>
<th>13 V 14</th>
<th>4 V 3</th>
<th>11 V 12</th>
<th>1 V 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 7</th>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>ROUND 9</th>
<th>ROUND 10</th>
<th>ROUND 11</th>
<th>ROUND 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/7 V 8/10</td>
<td>1/10 V 9/2</td>
<td>1/12 V 4/9</td>
<td>1/14 V 6/9</td>
<td>1/6 V 14/9</td>
<td>1/4 V 12/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5 V 13/12</td>
<td>5/14 V 13/6</td>
<td>7/14 V 13/8</td>
<td>7/12 V 11/8</td>
<td>3/8 V 7/4</td>
<td>5/8 V 7/6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2 V 9</th>
<th>7 V 8</th>
<th>6 V 5</th>
<th>3 V 4</th>
<th>12 V 11</th>
<th>13 V 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 13</th>
<th>ROUND 14</th>
<th>ROUND 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/10 V 9/8</td>
<td>1/8 V 7/2</td>
<td>1/2 V 10/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/14 V 6/12</td>
<td>4/6 V 14/12</td>
<td>5/6 V 14/13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 V 2</th>
<th>9 V 10</th>
<th>7 V 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### 1 V 1
Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix 15 Players

15 Players In Column Form

The coach will need to divide the players according to ability. Put the best 8 in group A and the next 7 in group B or vice-versa.

GROUP A - First 8 Players In Column Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/5 V 2/6</td>
<td>1/7 V 3/6</td>
<td>1/8 V 4/6</td>
<td>1/6 V 5/2</td>
<td>1/3 V 7/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/7 V 8/4</td>
<td>2/8 V 4/5</td>
<td>3/5 V 2/7</td>
<td>3/4 V 7/8</td>
<td>2/4 V 8/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUND 6</td>
<td>ROUND 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 V 8/6</td>
<td>1/2 V 6/5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/2 V 5/7</td>
<td>3/8 V 4/7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the first 7 rounds rank the players from the top eight 1 through 8 based on statistics earned thus far and play the following format for rounds 8, 9 & 10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{ST}/8\textsuperscript{TH} V 2\textsuperscript{ND}/7\textsuperscript{TH}</th>
<th>3\textsuperscript{RD}/6\textsuperscript{TH} V 4\textsuperscript{TH}/5\textsuperscript{TH}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ROUND 9</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{ST}/8\textsuperscript{TH} V 4\textsuperscript{TH}/5\textsuperscript{TH}</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{ND}/7\textsuperscript{TH} V 3\textsuperscript{RD}/4\textsuperscript{TH}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUND 10</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{ST}/8\textsuperscript{TH} V 3\textsuperscript{RD}/6\textsuperscript{TH}</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{ND}/7\textsuperscript{TH} V 4\textsuperscript{TH}/5\textsuperscript{TH}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GROUP B – Next 7 Players In Column Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/2 V 3/4</td>
<td>4/7 V 1/6</td>
<td>1/3 V 7/5</td>
<td>4/6 V 5/1</td>
<td>5/2 V 6/7</td>
<td>1/2 V 5/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 V 1</td>
<td>2 V 3</td>
<td>4 V 6</td>
<td>7 V 2</td>
<td>4 V 3</td>
<td>7 V 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 7</th>
<th>ROUND 8</th>
<th>ROUND 9</th>
<th>ROUND 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/2 V 7/1</td>
<td>1/4 V 3/6</td>
<td>3/7 V 4/5</td>
<td>5/6 V 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players not involved in 2 v 2 will play 1 v 1 as follows:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 V 3</td>
<td>2 V 5</td>
<td>1 V 6</td>
<td>4 V 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out or GK 6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15 Players In Line Form

GROUP A – First 8 Players In Line Form
ROUND 1  1/5 V 2/6  3/7 V 8/4
ROUND 2  1/7 V 3/6  2/8 V 4/5
ROUND 3  1/8 V 4/6  3/5 V 2/7
ROUND 4  1/6 V 5/2  3/4 V 7/8
ROUND 5  1/3 V 7/6  2/4 V 8/5
ROUND 6  1/4 V 8/6  3/2 V 5/7
ROUND 7  1/2 V 6/5  3/8 V 4/7

After the first 7 rounds rank the players from the top eight 1 through 8 and play the following format for rounds 8, 9 & 10

ROUND 8  1\textsuperscript{ST} \textit{TH} V 2\textsuperscript{ND} \textit{TH}  3\textsuperscript{RD} \textit{TH} V 4\textsuperscript{TH} \textit{TH}
ROUND 9  1\textsuperscript{ST} \textit{TH} V 4\textsuperscript{TH} \textit{TH}  2\textsuperscript{ND} \textit{TH} V 3\textsuperscript{RD} \textit{TH}
ROUND 10  1\textsuperscript{ST} \textit{TH} V 3\textsuperscript{RD} \textit{TH}  2\textsuperscript{ND} \textit{TH} V 4\textsuperscript{TH} \textit{TH}

GROUP B – Next 7 Players In Line Form

ROUND 1  7/2 V 3/4  5 V 1  6
ROUND 2  4/7 V 1/6  2 V 3  5
ROUND 3  1/3 V 7/5  4 V 6  2
ROUND 4  4/6 V 5/1  7 V 2  3
ROUND 5  5/2 V 6/7  4 V 3  1
ROUND 6  1/2 V 5/3  7 V 6  4
ROUND 7  4/2 V 7/1  5 V 3  6
ROUND 8  1/4 V 3/6  2 V 5  7
ROUND 9  3/7 V 4/5  1 V 6  2
ROUND 10  5/6 V 2/3  4 V 7  1
Individually Assessed 2 v 2 Round Robin Matrix – 16 Players

When matching up names and numbers please make sure that players 1 & 9, 2 & 10, 3 & 11, 4 & 12, 5 & 13, 6 & 14, 7 & 15, 8 & 16 are of equal ability because these players will be involved in every round either with, immediately against or on competing teams.

16 Players In Column Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7/15 V 8/16</td>
<td>7/16 V 8/15</td>
<td>6/16 V 8/14</td>
<td>6/8 V 16/14</td>
<td>6/15 V 7/14</td>
<td>6/7 V 15/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUND 7</td>
<td>ROUND 8</td>
<td>ROUND 9</td>
<td>ROUND 10</td>
<td>ROUND 11</td>
<td>ROUND 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/13 V 5/9</td>
<td>1/5 V 13/9</td>
<td>1/14 V 6/9</td>
<td>1/6 V 14/9</td>
<td>1/15 V 7/9</td>
<td>1/7 V 15/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/14 V 6/10</td>
<td>2/6 V 14/10</td>
<td>2/13 V 5/10</td>
<td>2/5 V 13/10</td>
<td>2/8 V 16/10</td>
<td>2/16 V 8/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16 V 8/12</td>
<td>4/8 V 16/12</td>
<td>4/15 V 7/12</td>
<td>4/7 V 15/12</td>
<td>4/13 V 5/12</td>
<td>4/5 V 13/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROUND 13</td>
<td>ROUND 14</td>
<td>ROUND 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/16 V 8/9</td>
<td>1/8 V 16/9</td>
<td>1/2 V 10/9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15 V 7/10</td>
<td>2/7 V 15/10</td>
<td>3/4 V 12/11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/14 V 6/12</td>
<td>4/6 V 14/12</td>
<td>7/8 V 16/15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16 Players In Line Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROUND 1</th>
<th>ROUND 2</th>
<th>ROUND 3</th>
<th>ROUND 4</th>
<th>ROUND 5</th>
<th>ROUND 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/9 V 2/10</td>
<td>3/11 V 4/12</td>
<td>5/13 V 6/14</td>
<td>7/15 V 8/16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/10 V 2/9</td>
<td>3/12 V 4/11</td>
<td>5/14 V 6/13</td>
<td>7/16 V 8/15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/11 V 3/9</td>
<td>2/12 V 4/10</td>
<td>5/15 V 7/13</td>
<td>6/16 V 8/14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3 V 11/9</td>
<td>2/4 V 12/10</td>
<td>5/7 V 15/13</td>
<td>6/8 V 16/14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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Appendix 3

Training Soccer Legends Forms

The following five pages contain blank copies of the Training Soccer Legends forms
# ONE V ONE & TWO V TWO - EVALUATION FORM

**TEAM _______ DATE _______**

For 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 or 18 player groups

Moves: Swivel-Swivel, Pull Back Behind Leg, Matthews, Matthews/Scissors, Half Scissors, Single Scissors, Multiple Scissors, Puskas, Cruyff, Rivelino, Swivel Step Over, Maradona, Tap N Play Behind Leg, Stop Hop N Roll, Ronaldinho

| Player Name | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | P T S F | P T S D | P R A N K | R A N K | R A N K | R A N K |
|             |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
| 1           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 2           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 3           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 4           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 5           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 6           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 7           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 8           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 9           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 10          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 11          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 12          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 13          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 14          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 15          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 16          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 17          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| 18          |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|            | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | Possible minus Actual |
| GK—GOALS LET IN |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
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| GK—GOALS LET IN |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
| EFFORT OUT OF 10 |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |
# ONE V ONE & TWO V TWO - EVALUATION FORM

**Team:**

**Date:**

FOR 4, 5, 6 PLAYER GROUPS

Moves: Swivel-Swivel, Pull Back Behind Leg, Matthews, Matthews/Scissors, Half Scissors, Single Scissors, Multiple Scissors, Puskas, Cruyff, Rivelino, Swivel Step Over, Maradona, Tap N Play, Behind Leg, Stop Hop N Roll, Ronaldinho

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GK—GOALS LET IN

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Possible minus Actual
| Player Name | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL | P T S F A | P T S D | R A N K F | R A N K D | R A N K D |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 2           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 3           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 4           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 5           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 6           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 7           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 8           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |
| 9           |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | EFFORT OUT OF 10 | POSSIBLE MINUS ACTUAL   |           |           |           |           |           |

**GK—GOALS LET IN**

**EFFORT OUT OF 10** Possible minus Actual

**GK—GOALS LET IN**

**EFFORT OUT OF 10** Possible minus Actual
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